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83rd Winter Meeting: Washington, DC

Johnson: “The State of the Union Is Strong Because the State of Our Cities Is Strong”
Woodland Mayor Finds Lots of Empathy in Washington (DC)

By Tom Stallard

“What happens when you get 300 mayors in the room? The answer, it turns out, is a lot. Induced by an offer of free registration, I attended the 83rd winter meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington (DC).

I went with low expectations, having no idea what kinds of things mayors would discuss. Three days later, I felt like I had been drinking from a fire hose, non-stop. The biggest surprise was that mayors seem, by nature, to want to help one another. Healthy rivalries aside (the mayors of Green Bay AND Seattle were there, as well as Boston and many other New England communities), there was a genuine spirit of good will and helpfulness.

There was also a lot of empathy. If you shared a local problem, you were given help in finding leads on who to contact. Shortly after entering the conference site, I came upon a table staffed by those who operate the Community Oriented Policing program. Woodland recently had been unsuccessful in getting a COPS grant for three new, badly needed officers. Two people immediately gave me their cards, offering to review our application to offer suggestions on how we could be more competitive. One of the cards said “Special Assistant to the President.”

“One of the days I was sitting in a break-out session on the subject of My Brother’s Keeper, a program designed to help young men and boys of color be successful as the reading levels, high school graduation rates, unemployment rates for this demographic is very low. The speakers were those who operate the program, including awarding grants.

“As I sat there, I wondered how Woodland could make use of this opportunity. They hit me: we need funding for our gang intervention work in our Hispanic community. At the question time, I stood up and asked if funds could be used for this kind of project and I got a one-word answer: ‘certainly.’

“I could list a few more similar examples but the point is made. Over the course of those days, eight cabinet secretaries addressed us, describing their programs that could help us. I sat in on a small group session with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on the subject of net neutrality and other technology issues.

“There were many interesting talks by prominent leaders like Vice President Joe Biden and his wife, community college professor Jill Biden who is passionate about education and girls education for the first two years at the nations community colleges. But the true highlight was sitting in the East Room of the White House and having the President of the United States speak to us. He appealed to us to make use of the programs available. He said, “Mayors get things done.” He also told us that if you know a better way to do something to call his staff and tell them.

“As a final word, I can’t express enough appreciation for the leadership of Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. He is the current president of the US Conference of Mayors. It is no exaggeration to say that he is beloved by mayors all over the country for his friendliness, kindness, inclusiveness and humor. In introducing President Obama, which he said was an even greater honor than guarding Michael Jordan, he put his cell phone up to the mic played rousing music and declared, ‘at six feet one, weighing 180 pounds, it’s the point guard of Pennsylvania Avenue, Barack Obama!’ The President came in laughing, staying an hour, much longer than he had planned.”

Thank you Mayor Stallard for expressing your thoughts. The brand of our organization is strengthened by your honesty and your impressions and feelings about our 83rd Winter Meeting. It validates that we are doing something right for our membership.

Strongeining Community Policing - 2015 - Onward!

There’s work to be done with strengthening community policing before our San Francisco Annual Meeting – June 19 to 22.

We are pleased to have President Obama’s Co-Chairs for his Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Philadelphia Police Chief Charles Ramsey and former Attorney General for DOJ’s Office of Justice Programs working with us. They came to our Winter Meeting and joined in two sessions and a press conference with Mayor Johnson and Ronald L. Davis, Director of the COPS Office.

As most of you know, Mayor Johnson has been leading our organization to be at the forefront in meeting the challenges we face, as manifested in Ferguson and New York City over the past few months. In September at our Leadership Meeting in Sacramento, Mayor Kevin Johnson devoted a large portion of our meeting to community policing. In October we had approximately forty police chiefs and forty mayors assembled with President Clinton and Attorney General Eric Holder at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock. Following the Little Rock sessions, President Johnson appointed Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson to head up the Conference's Task Force of Mayors and Police Chiefs for the purpose of providing our membership with specific recommendations on strengthening community policing. Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson presented our report “Strengthening Police-Community Relations In America’s Cities, A Report of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs” at our Winter Meeting.

We are sending all mayors the final document and we urge you the Freeman-Wilson report as a basis to present specific recommendations to the Justice Department and President Obama.

Chief Ramsey, Chair of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, indicated that he and Professor Robinson are on a fast track as dictated by President Obama and they will have their recommendations on President Obama’s desk on March 2. We have been informed that the President will announce his recommendations some time in late April.

Conference President Kevin Johnson, working with Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson and other key mayors, will be active during this process pushing our agenda forward.

We are in a good place on the issue of community policing. We thank Mayor Johnson for his leadership and we look forward to working with all of you as we go forward.

Thanks to all of the mayors who attended our Winter Meeting. Please stay tuned as we go forward during the Winter and Spring before we gather again for our 83rd Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Host Mayor Ed Lee and all of us are putting together a meeting you do not want to miss.

And thank you Mr. President, Mayor Kevin Johnson for your bold and dynamic 3.0 message as we move forward to make our cities better and stronger.

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Tom Cochran
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Contributing Editors
David W. Burns
Debra DeHaney-Howard
David Gatton
Larry Jones
Kathryn Kretschmar-Weyland
Eugene Lowe
Kevin McCarty
Tom McClimon

Photography: Wendy Willkerson and David Hathcox
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In Historic Speech, Johnson Calls for New Federalist Compact

By Paul Leroux

In the first State of the Cities Address ever given by a U.S. Conference of Mayors President, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson took to the podium in Washington (DC) January 21 to announce his vision of a restructured relationship between cities and the federal government. Addressing a crowd of nearly 300 mayors and calling his plan, "a new federalist compact," Johnson spoke the day after President Obama delivered his State of the Union just two miles away.

"The state of the union is strong because the state of our cities is strong," Johnson announced at the beginning of his speech. He cited U.S. Conference of Mayors/Zogby survey results that show nearly half of Americans say their cities are on the right track, while only 29 percent think the nation is. He also stressed that American mayors are the most trusted elected officials in the nation.

Despite this generally positive tone, Johnson stated, "Powerful forces are transforming the way people interact with their jobs, their neighborhoods, and their cities." Among these are globalization, income inequality, major demographic changes, climate change, and what Johnson called, "a growing gulf of mistrust between communities of color and law enforcement."

While mayors are working in their cities to address each of these forces, Johnson emphasized that it was necessary to rethink the federal-city partnership to truly solve them. "I want to expand on the vision of Cities 3.0, because it's not just about what we do within our cities, but a 3.0 city also interacts with the federal government in a different way," he said.

"We need what I'm calling a new federalist compact that recognizes the areas that require federal attention while leveraging and strengthening what truly drives the prosperity in the nation—our cities and metropolitan areas," Johnson said. In this new partnership, the federal government, "leads where it must, empowers cities where it can, and invests where it should."

In the domain of leading where it must, Johnson identified four areas where federal action is desperately needed. These are providing a robust safety net for the elderly and the disadvantaged, focusing more resources on freight movement, especially key freight corridors, and helping us to educate Members of Congress, about the importance of transportation investment to cities, and join with them to educate Members of Congress about the importance of furthering more public-private partnerships, deploying intelligent transportation systems, ensuring networks are ready for new technologies, and focusing more resources on freight movement, especially key freight corridors.

Johnson argued that cities are the best equipped to identify areas of improvement, but that federal investment was needed to make necessary impact. This new federalist compact, as articulated by Johnson, would represent a new era of American federalism, just as his "Cities 3.0" platform represents the new era of the American city. With this new paradigm, Johnson said, "Cities can drive the nation to economic and civic heights we've never seen."

House Transportation Chair Calls on Mayors to Help Move Strong Infrastructure Agenda in New Congress

By Kevin McCarty

Representative Bill Shuster (PA), Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, urged the nation’s mayors to work with the new Congress to build support for investment in the nation’s transportation infrastructure during his January 22 address before the Conference of Mayors 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington (DC).

"Transportation is vital, as everyone in this room knows. It is not just about business, it is about quality of life but it is about business, getting the products to markets, getting raw materials to where they need to go, shipping things overseas, and getting goods to the ports," Shuster said.

Shuster urged the mayors to work more closely with their business leaders and join with them to educate Members of Congress about the importance of transportation investment to cities, regions and the U.S. economy. He discussed the importance of action on a long-term surface transportation bill, a transformative aviation renewal bill and passenger rail reform bill. "I ask for your help. We can’t do any of these things unless we have a group like the mayors helping us move the agenda forward and helping us educate Members of Congress," he said.

Talking in some detail about the prospects for an agreement on surface transportation legislation, often called renewal of MAP-21, Shuster expressed optimism because he said the public increasingly understands the importance of this investment and leaders on both sides of the aisle want to come together to invest in transportation infrastructure.

He talked about Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "The great strength that Secretary Foxx brings is that he was a mayor." He added that, "It became very clear to me that Secretary Foxx knows how to get through the red tape."

"We are looking for places to work together with the President, and one of those places is in transportation and the infrastructure of this country," Shuster said. In his remarks, he cited his success in the last Congress in working in a bipartisan fashion within Congress, with backing from the mayors, to develop a strong consensus on water resources legislation.

Acknowledging that mayors are working each day in their cities on these issues, he said, "You have to work together with your local folks, with your councils, to make this happen." Referring the need to move legislation in Congress, he said, "This is our goal here in Washington."

Discussing his objectives for MAP-21 renewal, Shuster told the mayors that, "Producing a long-term bill – a five or six-year bill – is absolutely critical and paramount so first priority is provide some certainty." He then said, "We need to get Washington out of the way and give states and cities the ability to move projects forward because we all know time is money." He also spoke about the importance of furthering more public-private partnerships, deploying intelligent transportation systems, ensuring networks are ready for new technologies, and focusing more resources on freight movement, especially key freight corridors.

Shuster also stressed the need to...
President Obama: “If Cities Are Successful, Then America Is Going to be Successful”

By Ed Somers

Almost 250 mayors spent six hours in the White House January 23 to conclude the 83rd Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

The afternoon began with the mayors engaging in five breakout sessions in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building with key administration officials on topics including climate protection, trade and exports, health care and veterans housing, workforce development for the information technology and advanced manufacturing areas, and paid sick leave and minimum wage.

The mayors then moved to the East Room of the White House, where they engaged in plenary discussion sessions on the topics of immigration reform and community college/workforce training.

The immigration reform session featured White House Domestic Policy Director Cecilia Muñoz, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, and Anaheim Mayor Tom Tait, Co-Chair of the Conference of Mayors Immigration Reform Task Force.

The community college/workforce training session was opened by Dr. Jill Biden, Second Lady of the United States, and featured White House Intergovernmental Affairs Director Jerry Abramson and Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez.

President Obama: Mayors Make Things Happen

As he has done for several years, President Obama concluded the program by speaking to the mayors in an open media session, and then taking questions from mayors in a closed meeting.

Sacramento Mayor President Kevin Johnson was invited to introduce the President, which was a first for a Conference of Mayors President with the Obama White House.

Johnson spoke of how the life-path of President Obama helped motivate him to run for mayor.

“Amercia’s mayors could not have a better friend and ally in the White House,” than President Obama, Johnson said thanking him for opening the White House up to the mayors every year, and for his work on priorities such as equal pay for women, health care reform, ending the war in Iraq, and so much more.

And, in a one-of-a-kind final introduction featuring NBA-style hype music, Mayor Johnson deemed President Obama the “point guard of Pennsylvania Avenue.”

President Obama used most of his remarks to thank America’s mayors for the work they are doing on shared priorities. “I think as you’ve seen today, we take our partnership with you seriously because you’re often the place where change happens fastest. That’s one of the reasons why two of my Cabinet members happen to be former mayors; and a former president of this Conference, Jerry Abramson of Louisville, is one of my top advisors,” the President said.

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The President commended the work the Mayors’ Maker Challenge “to support local entrepreneurs working to create the industries and jobs of the future,” citing Mayor Greg Fischer and Louisville where “now students and engineers are creating smarter appliances at a community space in town, and hundreds of folks are getting trained for local software development jobs.”

“We’ve worked with some of you to raise the minimum wage without waiting for Congress. And more than 20 cities and counties have stepped up to raise the wage since 2013,” the President said, adding, “Some have passed sick leave...
Mayors Talk Next Generation Learning

By Megan Cardiff

As technology advances, education can advance with it. That was the message delivered at The U.S. Conference of Mayors Cities 3.0 Education Pre-Convening, sponsored by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and hosted by Conference of Mayors Jobs, Education and the Workforce Chairman West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon on January 20. Digital badging, one of the tools supported by cities of learning to facilitate student achievement, has been gaining momentum in recent years and has proven its value. It is a way for students to build their credentials in a form of a digital resume.

"Today’s modern city needs to be digital and focused," said Cabaldon. "Cities 3.0 offers us new opportunity, as well as a challenge, to cultivate education and the workforce systems together using technology.

At the event, mayors heard an in-depth description and analysis of the digital badging framework from three of its foremost experts: MacArthur Foundation Education Digital Media and Learning Director Carmanne M. Yowell, Joyce Foundation Strategy and Programs Vice President Beth Swanson, and Microsoft Education Policy and Programs Director Allyson Knox. Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings spoke on Dallas’s success as a leading City of Learning and how he has brought the digital badge program to his city. Rawlings talked about his focus as mayor being on the out-of-school aspect of learning, pointing out the 20/80 rule – 20 percent of what students learning in-school learning and 80 percent is outside the classroom. Dallas joined forces with their local non-profit Big Thought to connect students to digital badges and summer learning programs to develop new skills.

Knox gave the employer perspective of virtual credentials and discussed the Microsoft IT Academy, which the company developed as a tool for students to acquire technology skills they need to be successful in college and career through digital curriculum and certifications. "At Microsoft, we want every child to learn their full potential. This Academy better prepares them for college and work in a rapidly changing workplace and organizations," said Knox.

Swanson, who formerly worked for Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and launched the Cities of Learning movement there, discussed the success of Chicago’s digital badging model and what the Joyce Foundation is doing to expand the model into other cities. A digital badge program is a virtual assessment measure for students and adults that connects cultural and educational institutions to form an individual’s virtual resume.

Chicago launched its program in 2014 with help from the MacArthur Foundation to track kids summer reading progress. Now more than 120 organizations and institutions in the city have signed up to offer digital badges to kids who participate in their programs. Swanson explained, “Chicago’s ultimate goal is to expand the program so that students can use their badges toward high school or college credit and even show a potential employer the skills they’ve developed.”

The MacArthur Foundation, together with the Mozilla Foundation, has taken the driver’s seat in developing and implementing badging systems for cities. A badge has unique identifiers that connect to an individual and has the evidence of what he/she has done to promote his/her own learning. She further explained, all badges are verifiable and linked back to the organization or company that gave the badge. "These badges can be used to create learning and opportunity pathways that bring all learning experiences together," Yowell stated.

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laws, as well, and I want to help more of you do that."

“We launched the Mayors’ Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness, and Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans stepped up. Just a few weeks ago, New Orleans became the first major city to wipe out homelessness among veterans, and we could not be prouder of them,” the President said, also thanking Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton and Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker who are “closing in on that goal as well.”

The President spoke about the My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge established to, “create more pathways of success for boys and young men of color, and all young people, and over 150 local and tribal leaders have stepped up.” So in Birmingham, Mayor William Bell and business leaders have created a mentoring program. In New Haven, Mayor Toni Harp is canvassing neighborhoods along with police, teachers and firefighters to connect kids with services and support,” the President said.

Over and over, this was the theme of the President’s remarks and then discussion with the mayors. “On other urgent issues like responding to climate change or getting more families insured, rebuilding infrastructure, making sure that young Americans get the best start in life with quality pre-K – mayors like you are helping to get it done. And we want to help,” the President said adding, “Because if cities are successful, then America is going to be successful.”

And in concluding, the President stressed that, “I can guarantee you that we will not only partner with you aggressively, but we’re also going to be creative and show flexibility. And if you have ideas that don’t neatly fit into what’s already being done, we’re going to try to come up with answers to make sure that you can succeed.”

SHUSTER
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ensure the final legislation is “fiscally responsible. “We can’t pass a bill in Washington that we don’t pay for.” He was confident that Congress “would figure out how to get that funding stream” to pay for a long-term renewal bill.

In remarks on other pending legislation, Shuster cited the aviation renewal effort and the importance of doing something “bold and transformative,” explaining, “We have to make sure we don’t lose our lead in the world.” He also talked about airports as “huge economic generators.”

On rail legislation, Shuster explained that his committee had reached a bipartisan agreement on an Amtrak/intercity passenger rail legislation in October and that this bill would be moving early in this Congress. “Passenger rail is here to stay, but we have to figure out how to do it the right way,” Shuster said, adding that he wants to use the Northeast Corridor as a model for how we “get it right.”

In closing his remarks, he said, “By working together, we will be able to restrengthen our infrastructure and create the firm foundation for the economy and for the people that we serve.”

February 2, 2015

U.S. MAYOR
Vice President Biden Discusses Administration’s Success in Dealing with Critical Issues Facing Local Communities

By Larry Jones

Vice President Joe Biden spoke to mayors during the January 22 luncheon about the success of the Obama Administration in dealing with a number of critical issues facing local communities over the last six years. He started by reminding mayors that the Administration has long understood that the economic, political and social stability of America rest on the cities and that cities are the engines that drive the nation’s economy. Biden told mayors that the investments made in cities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), in the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2008, helped turn things around. The ARRA provided $110 billion to create jobs and invest in education, law enforcement, transportation, housing, water and other infrastructure projects.

Explaining just how bad things were at the time, Biden reminded mayors, saying, “When we took office, the national unemployment rate was above ten percent and in some of our cities it was above 14 and 16 percent. And because of your leadership, a lot started to happen.” He mentioned TIGER grants, COPS grants, and support for teachers to stabilize the education system, as well as the direct support to local communities.

Biden thanked the mayor of Oklahoma City “for making us look good. You know how he did it? He took a TIGER grant and he made it work. And it helped transform his city.”

Biden told mayors that we are on the right path now. Over 11 million jobs have been created. “We have created more jobs in the United States of America under our economic platform than all of the industrialized nations in the world combined,” he said. He also mentioned that the federal deficit has been cut by two-thirds and the stock market has tripled. In 2008 he said the question was if the stock market was going to fall below 6,000 points. Because the stock market has grown so significantly, he said people with 401 K pension plans have gained back everything that was lost.

On health care, Biden said, “I know there is still great debate about our Affordable Care Act. But one thing can’t be denied, health care costs are rising at the lowest rate in a half century. That saves you in government hundreds of billions of dollars.”

Commenting on ending the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, he said while there is still controversy about the Administration ending the wars, “The American people know that it saves us hundreds of billions of dollars. These are dollars that the Administration has been able to put back into local communities and the economy.”

Biden told mayors that in order to continue the progress, the nation must modernize its infrastructure. Right now he said we’re ranked 26th in the world in transportation infrastructure. To get companies that have moved their operations offshore to move back to America, he said we must ensure that we have a modern transportation system, skilled workforce, safe environment and an adequate water supply. To pay for all of these things, he said the Administration is willing to consider corporate tax reform. Biden pointed out that “The only difference between the Republican and Democratic leaders is we want to lower it to 28 percent and they say 26 percent.” But, he said, the problem now is a lot of corporations pay 35 percent and a lot pay zero. Those who pay zero are lobbying very hard to block any progress on corporate tax reform. He explained that eliminating the tax expenditures that these corporations receive would generate over 100 billion, which could be used to pay for infrastructure modernization.

Former Mayors, Now Top Administration Officials, Discuss Roles, Relationships with Cities

Four former mayors now serving in President Obama’s Cabinet and White House joined Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson at the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting for a January 23 plenary panel that gave each of them an opportunity to discuss federal-city relationships along with how their city hall experience influences their current leadership roles in Washington.

Joining Johnson were Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, former mayor of Mount Pleasant (IA), and former governor of Iowa; Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro, former mayor of San Antonio; Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, former mayor of Charlotte (NC); and White House Intergovernmental Affairs Director Jerry Abramson, former mayor of Louisville.

“The people in this room all have something in common,” said Vilsack, “and that is, we have executive person- alities. We want to get things done, we want to make decisions, and we want to see results.” In a sense, he said, “being the Secretary of Agriculture is like being mayor of all the small cities and towns across rural America. It’s, in a sense like being governor of 50 states for rural America because all that you all do as mayors, and that governors do, the Secretary of Agriculture is able to do. It’s a job that I love and it’s a job I’m well prepared for because of my experience as a mayor and a governor.”

Asked to assess how the Obama administration was meeting the needs of cities, Castro said, “What the administration has done better that any before is to organize itself across the silos, across the departments of the federal government, and to encourage local communities to mirror that at the local level.”

“To the extent that those relationships at the local level take greater hold because of, in part, the work that has been done by the Obama administration, not only are we serving cities well today but, for the long haul, we’re serving cities well,” Castro said.

“There’s a great deal of interest in terms of what’s happening at the local level,” said Abramson. Using the President’s recent initiative on increasing access to community college as an example, Abramson explained that “they reach out to me and then I reach out to you to find out what’s going on in your communities around the country regarding these domestic agenda initiatives.”

“You have to be really clear with your leaders here in Washington — your House members, your Senators — on what your vision really is,” said Foxx, and “you also have to be clear on why that vision isn’t happening right now.”

“I think we can make a big dent, working together, in helping Congress realize that the Highway Trust Fund get- ting topped off is not going to take us very far,” said Foxx, “but putting more investment in infrastructure so that you can realize your vision will help this country create jobs and move us into the 21st century economy. We need to grow the investment. We can’t just tap it off.”
The Women Mayors met on January 21 during the 83rd Annual Winter Meeting to learn about STEMconnector and Million Women Mentors.

Monrovia Mayor Mary Ann Lutz, Chair of the Women Mayors, opened the meeting and introduced STEMconnector CEO Edie Fraser. Working with over 3,500 organizations, ranging from government agencies to multinational corporations, STEMconnector has grown to become the preeminent network of like-minded organizations that are working to build the talent in STEM fields, with a particular emphasis on advancing minorities and women in STEM.

Following Fraser’s remarks, Million Women Mentors Chief Partnership Officer Julie Kantor related to the women mayors that Million Women Mentors supports the engagement of one million women (and men) in STEM to serve as mentors by 2018. They are working nationally to support middle school through early career young women with confidence to persist and succeed in STEM programs and careers.

Apollo Group External Affairs Vice President Jane Oates, and formerly U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training, spoke about the value of engaging mayors, especially women mayors, to join in this effort to promote more and more women into STEM careers.

And lastly, Alpha Corporation Chief Executive Officer Kate Lindsey, a nationally ranked Top 100 Project Management/Construction Management firm, spoke about joining with STEMconnector and Million Women Mentors as an example of what women can do in STEM careers.

Lutz then introduced Conference of Mayors Vice President Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake to invite the women mayors to attend the Summit on the Elevation of Women and Girls: ItsTime2015 that will be held in Baltimore May 1-3.

Women Mayors Vice Chair Clarksville Mayor Kim McMillan then urged women mayors who are interested in moving up within the Conference of Mayors to be on the lookout for the announcement of the Nominating Committee which will be appointed by Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. She also indicated that the Women Mayors would hold an election in June for Chair and Vice Chair and that Lutz would soon appoint a Nominating Committee for the Women Mayors.

Left to right, Alpha Corporation CEO Kate Lindsey, Women Mayors Chair Monrovia Mayor Mary Ann Lutz, Women Mayors Vice Chair Clarksville Mayor Kim McMillan, STEMconnector CEO Edie Fraser, and Million Women Mentors Chief Partnership Officer Julie Kantor.

Left to right, Washington (DC) Mayor Muriel Bowser, USCM Vice President Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson celebrate the connection between Baltimore and Washington.

The opening reception honoring women mayors was sponsored by Google, Inc. and Engine Advocacy.
New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio formally announced in a press conference following his remarks in the January 23 plenary session of the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting that “...more than 30 mayors from all over the country are joining forces to fight together for the immigration reform we so desperately need for the whole country, but particularly for the people of our cities. We are together filing a joint amicus brief in the U.S. District Court in Texas in support of the President’s executive action on immigration.”

The mayors’ brief is being filed in opposition to a motion filed in that court by 25 Republican governors seeking a preliminary injunction that would halt implementation of the executive action taken by President Obama on November 20 that, among other reforms, sets conditions that would allow undocumented parents of citizens and lawful permanent residents to temporarily remain in the U.S. The effort to bring mayors together to support the brief has been led by de Blasio and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Surrounded by mayors attending the Conference of Mayors annual winter meeting in Washington – many of whom are signatories to the amicus brief – Mayor de Blasio explained: “The President’s plan has the potential to grant aid to all of our fellow Americans who happen to be undocumented immigrants. That will make a transcendent impact on these individuals and their families, and will play a fruitful role in our cities, in our economies, and in the lives of our citizens.”

“We believe that the voices of the cities have not been heard enough in this debate up to now,” de Blasio said. “And we want to change that because we believe that this country will be stronger when it’s more inclusive and more fair to all.”

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee said that, while comprehensive immigration reform has been the ultimate goal for cities, “If we have [immigrant] communities that are in doubt about what their status is, they are going to be less cooperative, certainly less trustworthy. While waiting for that comprehensive reform, we want to do everything we can to make sure that the connections to all of our communities are strong.”

“As the son of immigrant parents, I know personally that this affects the trust that people have in their local governments. So we’re going to do all we can to make sure that we aggressively have the programs that welcome our immigrants, particularly the undocumented, to make sure that they’re safe, to make sure that they’re welcome to participate in all aspects, to make sure that they’re on the road to pathways to citizenship,” Lee said.

“When people are drowning, you throw them a lifeline,” said Houston Mayor Annise Parker. “When you see fire you pull a fire alarm. When you come upon an accident, you offer first aid. You step up in a crisis. What our President has done is step up in a crisis where Congress has failed to act.” “We are here in support of the President’s action, because it was necessary and appropriate, and we really can’t wait any longer,” Parker said.

Among other mayors offering statements of support for the President’s action were Seattle’s Ed Murray; Hartford’s Pedro Segarra, who is the Chair of the Conference of Mayors Task Force on Immigration Reform; and Salt Lake City’s Ralph Becker who, in his capacity as the current President of the National League of Cities, announced that that organization had signed on to the mayors’ brief. In announcing that the Conference of Mayors was joining the brief, CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran provided a historical perspective on the organization’s support for executive actions. “President Roosevelt asked us to stand up with him to supply war machinery and planes to fight Hitler,” Cochran said. “President Kennedy called us to stand in front of the Brandenburg Gate and support the Berlin Air Lift. President Reagan called us to meet and talk with Secretary Shultz to support the Salt II talks after he met with Gorbachev. President Clinton had an executive action to prop up the Mexican peso, and we supported him.”

“I’m tired of writing letters to Congress about immigration,” Cochran said. “I think when the President, like a mayor, takes action like this, our organization stands to support this and to let you know that we must continue to work on immigration reform, and we will.”
At press time, the following 33 mayors had signed on to the cities’ amicus brief in *State of Texas v. United States of America*:

- New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio
- Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti
- Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed
- Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
- Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown
- Central Falls (RI) Mayor James DiNenna
- Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel
- Columbia (SC) Mayor Steve Benjamin
- Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley
- Denver Mayor Michael Hancock
- Washington (DC) Mayor Muriel Bowser
- Dolton (IL) Mayor Riley Rogers
- Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra
- Houston Mayor Annise Parker
- Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop
- Madison Mayor Paul Soglin
- Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges
- Newark Mayor Ras Baraka
- Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf
- Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter
- Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto
- Portland Mayor Charles Hales, on behalf of Portland City Council
- Providence Mayor Jorge O. Elorza
- Racine Mayor John Dickert
- Richmond (CA) Mayor Tom Butt
- Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren
- Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker
- San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee
- Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy
- Seattle Mayor Ed Murray
- St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay
- Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland
- Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano

Six additional mayors have expressed support and are awaiting final local approval:

- Hamtramck Mayor Karen Majewski
- Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero
- Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett
- Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton
- Corpus Christi Mayor Nelda Martinez
- Flint Mayor Dayne Walling
Trade Ambassador to Mayors: “We Can’t Do This Without You”

By Dave Gatton

The nation’s U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Michael Froman, told the nation’s mayors they play a critical role in explaining how major trade agreements, expected to be finalized this year, can grow jobs, increase wages, expand businesses and connect their constituents to the global economy.

“We can’t do this without you,” he said to a packed room of mayors who convened in Washington (DC) for the 83rd Winter meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, January 21. He appealed to the mayors to help pass Trade Promotion Authority and to garner support for the trade deals that level the playing field for American business and its workers.

Speaking to mayors the morning after the President delivered his State of the Union Address, Froman said the economic recovery was dependent on the nation’s dramatically growing exports.

“If you could put a label on this comeback, it would read ‘Made-in-America.’ That’s because our exports have contributed nearly one-third of our economic growth since the second quarter of 2009,” he told the mayors.

According to Froman, between 2000 and 2009, manufacturing grew less than three percent a year on average, but in the last four years, exports have grown by 11 percent a year on average, supporting 1.6 million additional jobs that tend to pay 13 percent to 18 percent higher wages.

But to sustain the economic comeback, in part the result of manufacturing returning to U.S. shores, Froman told the mayors that it was essential to put American businesses and workers on a level playing field with other countries.

Specifically, Froman cited the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) currently under negotiation with eleven Asia-Pacific countries representing 40 percent of the global economy. Many of these countries charge higher tariffs for U.S. made automobiles, poultry, and aluminum bars, to name a few products, than they do other countries. Plus, many of these same countries have lower environmental and labor standards than the U.S., giving their products unfair advantage in the market place.

The TPP agreement would level the playing field by including enforceable environmental and labor standards and providing a more uniform tariff system. The agreement would also place disciplines on state-owned enterprises and ensure a free and open Internet.

The stakes are huge given the size and growth of the Asia-Pacific region. “You really can’t put a price tag on a level playing field. That’s because the Asia-Pacific region is expected to grow dramatically,” he told the mayors. By 2030 the Asian middle class consumer will grow to 3.2 billion, up from 252 million in 2009.

The Ambassador warned that if the U.S. does not take participate in the TPP, global trade rules will be written by China, which would result in distinct disadvantages to the U.S.

He called on the mayors to help educate the American public on the economic benefits of TPP and the need for Congress to pass Trade Promotion Authority, commonly known as “fast track” legislation. But he said the legislation is anything but “fast track.” “The one thing about so-called ‘fast track’ is that there is nothing fast about it.” Trade agreements take years to negotiate … and there is an enormous amount of consultation with the public, stakeholders, and Members of Congress,” he said.

The Ambassador spoke at the Conference of Mayors before the Council on Metro Economies and the New American City. Its Chair, Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman, pledged the mayor’s support for TPA and efforts to expand exports among small and medium sized businesses.

Secretary Perez Stresses Shared Prosperity at Summer Jobs Forum

By Kathy Wiggins

“The domestic agenda of this President is all about what you’re doing as city officials,” Department of Labor Secretary Perez told the mayors gathered for the Innovations and Best Practices Forum: Mayoral Leadership in Private Sector Engagement for Summer Jobs and Long-Term Youth Employment at the 83rd U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting.

Sponsored by the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, the forum was moderated by Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, and also featured panel remarks by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, Madison Paul Soglin, Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl and J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation Head of Workforce Initiatives Chauncy Lennon.

“Our economy is moving in the right direction and we have the longest streak on record, but our challenge is to ensure that this prosperity is shared prosperity,” said Perez. “We all succeed when we all succeed. My biggest challenge is building a skilled workforce to compete. Apprenticeship is the other college — without the debt. We need to embed it into the DNA here like it is in Europe. We have $100 million on the street out now to support it.”

“Giving access to opportunity unlocks incredible potential,” Perez said in closing. “Your investments in the future workforce – including Summer Job opportunities – are providing opportunities to career pathways to the middle class.”

There is no greater contribution a city can make than educating our children, according to Rawlings. His Mayor’s Intern Fellows Program is an effective way for public high school students to make the connection between a college education and great career. “That’s why I’m looking for businesses to invest in our youth and future workforce by providing paid internships this summer,” Rawlings said.

“The American Dream isn’t there for all of us,” Garcetti told the crowd. “In Los Angeles, we focus on the ‘summer melt effect’ – the 10-20 percent of kids coming back in the fall further behind than the previous year. We then focus on freezing that summer melt, and my first press conference was on Summer Jobs. We had 11,000 Summer Jobs the first year, and yet we still had to turn 14,000 kids away.” So Los Angeles focused on community participation. Disney stepped up with a $1 million investment, Citibank and J.P. Morgan also stepped up. Universities, non-profits and Los Angeles helped with a water conservation proj
Mayors Compete for Most Livable City Honor

By Jocelyn Bogen

With a wide range of programs eligible, The United States Conference of Mayors and Waste Management launched the mayor’s race for the honor of calling themselves a 2015 City Livability Award. Program Award winner has begun with the mailing of the application and guidelines to mayors of cities of 30,000 or more.

“Waste Management is the largest environmental solutions provider in North America, serving more than 20 million municipal, commercial and industrial customers in the U.S. and Canada. Sustainability is the driving force of our business and is the central motivation behind our transformation from a waste disposal company to an environmental solutions provider that views waste as a resource,” said Waste Management Chief Executive Officer David Steiner. “We've been a proud sponsor of The City Livability Awards for 26 years because it is a reflection of our core values. At Waste Management, we share The U.S. Conference of Mayors City Livability Awards commitment to contribute toward a more sustainable society and make cities and communities better places to live,” he added.

Participating cities will submit an initial application of 500 words, due on Friday, March 6, which briefly describes their program, and indicates when and why it was created, how it has improved the quality of life of the community, and why it is outstanding or innovative.

From these initial applications, about 20 second round cities in each of two population categories will be selected. These second round cities will then submit a more detailed application, due on Friday, May 1. An independent panel of judges will select the winners in May. Award winners will be announced in June at the 83rd Annual Conference of Mayors in San Francisco. The 20 City Livability Awards are presented in two population categories – ten Awards to cities of less than 100,000 people, ten for cities of 100,000 or more.

Every municipality in the United States is eligible to nominate one or more city government programs in any policy area, regardless of whether the municipality has applied for or received a City Livability Award in previous years. All programs initiated by the city government are eligible, including those developed and implemented in cooperation with private sector and/or community group participation.

SUMMER JOBS

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tect. The city also folded financial education into their programs. “We have four rules,” said Fischer. “[1] Don’t be afraid to cut what’s bad; [2] Focus on high-growth industries like tech and healthcare, matching kids to what they like; [3] Find mentors but let them happen organically, don’t force them on people; and [4] Blend opportunities into the program.”

How is corporate citizenship in your community? Fischer asked in closing. “I have never had anyone turn me down who I asked to help. We need to create joy in kids who never knew work could be joyful. Work can touch their humanity.”

Soglin emphasized that mayors can’t make the ask of business leaders until they themselves are providing summer employment opportunities. “Ask city agencies to find slots,” he said. “We came up with 20 slots without a budget request.”

Tisdahl held Mayor’s Day at Evanston High School and did personal business

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser: “We Do What We Need to Do’’

The new mayor of the District of Columbia, Muriel Bowser, welcomed the nation’s mayors to the nation’s capital on January 21. Bowser said that DC, which is a “city, county and state all rolled into one,” is adding about 1,000 residents a month. She commended her colleagues for local leadership that does not reflect partisanship, and innovates.
Conference of Mayors Presents Policing Recommendations to President Obama’s Task Force during Winter Meeting

Johnson Says Public Safety Job One for Mayors

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

The Conference of Mayors Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs, chaired by Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, unveiled its recommendations to strengthen police-community relations during the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting and presented them to the Co-chairs and Executive Director of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing in a January 22 plenary session led by Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson.

During the January 22 session, Johnson commented that the police-involved deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson (MO) and Eric Garner in New York City, the decision by grand juries not to indict police officers in those cases, and the assassination of two New York police officers apparently in retaliation for those deaths “have shaken the public’s perception of policing in America and of the criminal justice system. They have highlighted the rift that may exist between police officers and the communities they serve, as well as the dangers those officers face every day.” “As mayors we stand at the crossroads of our communities and can bring residents on both sides of this issue together to build common ground,” he continued.

Johnson explained that following discussions of the Ferguson situation at the Conference of Mayors leadership meeting in Sacramento in September and its community policing meeting in Little Rock in October, he appointed a working group of mayors and police chiefs chaired by Freeman-Wilson, and charged the group with developing a series of recommendations for local and national actions to improve policing in America.

The recommendations are grouped into six areas: building police-community trust, improving police department practices, ensuring timely and accurate communications, conducting independent investigations, addressing racial and economic disparities, and providing national leadership. The full report, Strengthening Police-Community Relations in America’s Cities, is available at www.usmayors.org.

Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force

The Winter Meeting discussion of the recommendations began with the January 21 meeting of the Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force, chaired by Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin. She explained that the working group had been meeting through conference calls and that the task force was devoting its meeting to consideration of the recommendations so that all of the mayors and police chiefs present in the packed room would have an opportunity to discuss and have input into the report’s recommendations.

Present at the task force meeting were the co-chairs of the President’s Task Force, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and George Mason University Professor Laurie Robinson. They briefed the mayors on the membership and work of the President’s Task Force, which is due to present its recommendations to President Obama in early March. Robinson described the subjects for the upcoming listening sessions that the task force will be conducting:

- January 30: Cincinnati: Policy and Oversight
- January 31: Cincinnati: Technology and Social Media
- February 13: Phoenix: Community Policing and Crime Reduction
- February 14: Phoenix: Training and Education
- February 23: Washington (DC) Officer Safety and Wellness

Freeman-Wilson discussed the recommendations developed by the Conference of Mayors mayor-police chief working group. She prefaced her report by saying that “this is not an issue, however, that law enforcement can solve alone.” “There is work that needs to be done throughout the community,” she continued, “and this presents an opportunity to engage in problem-solving to transform our communities.”

Swearengin then moderated a discussion in which several of the mayors and police chiefs recommended additions to the draft recommendations. Among their comments: Racine Mayor John Dickert discussed the importance of providing police officers training in the handling of individuals exhibiting mental illness. Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic talked about the importance of having consistent, independent investigations of police-involved deaths so that the public will have confidence that the investigations are legitimate and impartial.

Vallejo Mayor Osby Davis talked about the need to build trust between the whole city government and the community, not just between the police and the community.

At the end of the session Ramsey commented that the Working Group’s report would be useful to the President’s Task Force as it moves forward and that the issues raised in the discussion are the ones the Task Force is looking at in as much detail as possible.

The mayors and police chiefs’ recommendations made in the session were incorporated into the Working Group’s report, which was released in the plenary breakfast the following morning.

Strengthening Community Policing Plenary Session

Johnson kicked off the January 22 plenary discussion by recalling the findings in the Zogby poll released the day before. “Despite the troubling events of the last months, the poll found that more than half of our residents say they trust their local government when it comes to providing public safety for all citizens,” Johnson said. “The poll showed that all communities – Black, White, Latino – approve of the job their local law enforcement is doing. And the poll confirmed what we already know—that job number one for mayors is assuring the safety of our cities and our residents. Sixty-five percent of respondents ranked public safety as the top issue they want mayors to tackle.”

Also participating in the plenary session were White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Jerry Abramson, COPS Office Director Ron Davis, and Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson.
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White House Task Force Co-chairs Charles Ramsey and Laurie Robinson, COPS Office Director Ron Davis, who serves as Executive Director of the Task Force, and Conference of Mayors Working Group Chair Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson.

In briefing the mayors on the working group’s recommendations, Freeman-Wilson said that improving police/community relations is “not just a law enforcement issue. The whole community — business, the not for profit community, civic and social organizations, the faith community, police, and government at all levels — must be involved to assure not just public safety, but justice and a sense of justice.”

She discussed the importance of practicing community policing as a philosophy; of examining police recruitment, training, equipment, and disciplinary procedures; of assuring independent and thorough investigations of officer-involved deaths; and of exerting mayoral leadership.

“The real tragedy comes an opportunity...and this is also an opportunity for us as mayors,” Freeman-Wilson said. “But this is not for the faint of heart, because you will find yourself in the middle of people who appear to have competing interests. But at end of the day our opportunity is really to demonstrate through our leadership that these really are not competing interests and that we can achieve a sense of justice and a sense of confidence in our communities.” “As mayors we can navigate through the land mines that may exist around these issues or create a new landscape in our communities that will allow us to create better communities for our children,” she concluded.

Ramsey congratulated Freeman-Wilson on her work as chair of the Conference of Mayors working group, of which he was a member, and on the report it produced which, he said, “puts a lot of pressure on the President’s Task Force.”

Robinson commented that the work of the task force is about listening, and “getting the input of important organizations like this one.”

Davis referred to the events in Ferguson and New York as “a perfect storm” which gives us the opportunity to make the kind of changes we need, deserve, and want to make. “When we talk about public safety it’s more than the absence of crime, but the presence of justice,” he commented. “How we balance this and provide the President with recommendations to achieve both is the key.”

Abramson talked about the Conference of Mayors efforts 20 years ago, while he was mayor of Louisville and President of the Conference of Mayors, when it brought together mayors and police chiefs who worked with President Clinton and the Congress to pass the crime bill, and the COPS program. “We made a difference then,” he told the mayors. “And you have a chance to do it again.”

Following the presentations, a number of mayors took advantage of the opportunity to make recommendations to and ask questions of the President’s Task Force leaders.

Press Conference
Following the session, Johnson and Freeman-Wilson, Ramsey, Davis, and Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran made themselves available to the media to answer questions about the working group’s report and the work of the President’s Task Force. Johnson summarized some of the areas which mayors discussed during the question and answer session.

U.S. Conference of Mayors
Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs

Chair: Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson

Member Mayors:

- Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis
- New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu
- Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter
- Houston Mayor Annise Parker
- Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
- St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay
- Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola

Member Chiefs:

- Baltimore Commissioner Anthony Batts
- Little Rock Chief Kenton Buckner
- Salt Lake City Chief Chris Burbank
- Houston Executive Assistant Chief and Chief of Staff Martha Montalvo
- Philadelphia Commissioner Charles Ramsey
- Sacramento Chief Sam Somers
- Woodway (TX) Chief Yost Zakhary
Conference of Mayors
President Johnson Responds to President Obama’s State of the Union Address

“As mayors often say, As go cities, so goes the nation.

“The nation’s mayors are pleased that President Obama embraces proposals that make cities strong and grow local economies by helping working families and those who live in our metropolitan areas.

“The President’s proposals to help working families by raising the minimum wage, increasing paid sick leave for families, ensuring pay equity, making higher education more affordable, closing tax loopholes and making new investments in infrastructure are all issues that underscore the work of the Mayors’ Cities of Opportunity Task Force, which was established to identify strategies to address income inequality, promote economic mobility and create jobs in America’s cities.

“The nation is strong because our cities are strong. And our cities and their metropolitan areas are only as strong as the people in our local communities.”

On the heels of the President’s State of the Union Address, USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson convened a press conference to provide USCM leadership an opportunity to respond to the State of The Union. Johnson reminded reporters that cities and their metropolitan areas are the drivers of our national economy, and the state of the union is strong because the state of our nation’s cities is strong. The mayors also released the findings of a Zogby Poll that examines public perceptions of all levels of government and underscores the influence of local government on city residents.

Mayors Release First U.S. Conference of Mayors/ Zogby Poll at 83rd Winter Meeting

By Dave Gatton

Nearly a majority of Americans (47 percent) believe their city is on the right track compared to only 29 percent who believe the country is, according to the inaugural U.S. Conference of Mayors/ Zogby Poll released at the Conference of Mayors 83rd Winter meeting in Washington (DC) June 21.

Over a majority of respondents (53 percent) said their city embraced the 21st century, with all political subgroups agreeing: Democrats 59 percent to 21 percent; Republicans 50 percent to 26 percent; and independents 47 percent to 19 percent.

As for the economy, respondents gave a 41 percent positive to 21 percent negative to their city’s capacity to “build relationships with businesses and citizens to create jobs.”

To whom does the public turn to provide new ideas, innovation and opportunities for economic growth? According to respondents small business owners ranked first with 58 percent, followed by young entrepreneurs and graduates at 38 percent and mayors at 37 percent. Congress, White House economists and Wall Street advisors ranked last.

Mayors also received high marks for “providing safety to all”—with 54 percent giving them high marks, while only 19 percent gave low marks. Police fared even higher “in protecting the safety and rights of minorities”—62 percent high, 32 percent low. Whites offer a 67 percent high to 29 percent low performance for police; Hispanics 60 percent high to 34 percent low; and African Americans 50 percent high to 43 percent low.

Fifty-seven percent give high scores to cities for “keeping the community clean” and 60 percent like the way that cities “provide parks and recreation.”

Mayors rank higher than other elected officials, including governors, Members of Congress, and the President, but the public overall remains skeptical of all public officials.

Despite their low esteem of Washington politicians, the public still expects Congress and the Administration to get something done.

Fifty-five percent say passing a transportation infrastructure bill is a high priority (11 percent low priority) and 53 percent want Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration bill (18 percent low priority).

The survey was conducted by Zogby Analytics on 2,425 respondents from December 19 through December 22, 2014. It has a margin of error of +/- 2.0 percent.
Council on Metro Economies and New American City Launches 2015 Agenda; Releases 2015 Metro Jobs Forecast

By Dave Gatton

The Council on Metro Economies and the New American City released its 2015 metro jobs forecast showing that for the first time since the recovery began, all 363 metro areas would see job growth by year end. The Council met during the 83rd U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in Washington (DC) January 21.

“This is encouraging news,” said Council Chair Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman. “The recovery is picking up steam and turning the corner.”

Presented by IHS Regional Economies Director Jim Diffley, the forecast also said that by the close of 2015, 316 metros (87 percent) would see job growth of greater than 1.0 percent and 199 metros (55 percent) will have returned to their pre-recession peak levels of employment. This compares to 164 metros (45 percent), which had regained their last jobs by the end of 2014.

Diffley predicted the economy would see real GDP growth of 3.1 percent in 2015, the fastest since 2005.

Sustainable Redevelopment

In a ted-talk style, Madison Mayor Paul Soglin described his city’s approach to sustainable redevelopment, focusing on four pillars: local food, storm water management, multi-use paths and infill development.

On food, Soglin described a network of over 50 community gardens consisting of 30 cultivated acres with 50 percent of participants living below the poverty level. Coupled with programs that promote Farm to Restaurants, Farm to Schools (community gardens now at every school), and Farmers’ Markets, this network has infused the city with an appreciation of its connection to food and its economic impact on the city.

Infill development has picked up dramatically in the city. In the last decade (1990-2010) the city saw 3,649 newly constructed dwelling units. In 2014 alone, 2,175 units were constructed, bringing more population and density to the city. In the downtown area an additional 2,277 units are under construction or approved by the city.

Soglin provided dramatic ‘before and after’ photos of infill commercial and residential development that were stunning in their impact on the community.

The mayor then described his promotion of rain gardens, detention ponds, green roofs and aggressive street sweeping to improve storm water runoff. Aside from greening the city, the 567 rain gardens (the goal is 1,000) built over the last decade pepper the city and improve water management.

To enhance transportation options and cut emissions, the mayor has promoted an extensive network of bicycle lanes and paths across the city. Pedestrian enhancements, such as closing State Street to vehicle traffic—a move initially opposed by businesses—have garnered restaurants, daily activity and night life that have now made the street the busiest in Wisconsin.

The mayor and his city will host the Conference of Mayors Bike Summit, May 13-15 in Madison.

U.S. Conference of Mayors/Zogby Poll

Zogby Analytics President Jonathan Zogby then reviewed the first release of The U.S. Conference of Mayors/Zogby Poll surveying the attitudes of the American public toward cities and local elected officials.

Nearly half of respondents (47 percent) said their city was “on the right track,” while only 29 percent thought the country was. A majority (53 percent) felt their city ‘embraced the 21st century’ with only one in five respondents saying their city was stuck in the last century.

On the question of where respondents look for innovative and new ideas for economic growth, small business owners ranked highest (58 percent), followed by young entrepreneurs and graduates (38 percent) and mayors (37 percent).

Congress, White House economists and Wall Street advisors ranked last.

As for the economy, respondents gave a 41 percent positive to 21 percent negative to their city’s capacity to “build relationships with businesses and citizens to create jobs.” Cities were given higher marks for “providing public safety to all” at 54 percent.

Financial Education, Banking

Bank of America Executive for Community Affairs Angie Garcia Lathrop discusses important financial education and consumer-friendly banking services.

Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)

Richard Stafford, Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy and Director Metro 21 at CMU, then outlined a new joint relationship with the university and Pittsburgh to identify innovative solutions to the city’s operations and economic development initiatives. As part of the Council, Pittsburgh Mayor Peduto and CMU will share their innovations with other members and expand the network of academic resources to work on city problems.

“We have a busy year ahead of us,” said Coleman. “We will continue to provide the Conference of Mayors with our metro economy publications, work on further sustainable development best practices, promote investment in underserved neighborhoods, and expand financial education in our cities.”
Mayors Address Water Mandates, Opportunities for Progress on Infrastructure Development

By Rich Anderson

Indianapolis (IN) Mayor Gregory A. Ballard chaired a meeting of the Mayors Water Council at the 83rd Winter Meeting of the Conference of Mayors in Washington (DC) January 23. The meeting addressed unfunded mandates and help for cities in financing water infrastructure.

Mayors Roundtable on City Water Issues

Participating mayors introduced themselves and commented on their major water issues. Most mayors cited water supply scarcity and federal unfunded mandates as the biggest challenges they face. Other mayors expressed concern about drinking water safety, contamination events and the need for emergency response protocols to be more accessible to mayors.

Des Moines (IA) Mayor Frank Cownie commented that last year the city was involved with a suit against EPA over blending and bypass that the city won. This year the city is suing a neighboring county under the Clean Water Act to redefine the concept of point source pollutant. The county in question is agricultural, and Des Moines has monitored 72 sites with leaking pipes (could be redlined as a point source discharge subject to regulation) that discharge nitrates at levels that exceed the ten parts per million standard that Des Moines must spend money to treat.

The biggest impediment in the process was the Chicago EPA Regional offices. “Their approaches were not only burdensome but bankrupting, not only demanding but dictatorial. The city could not agree to their approach,” he said. He also stated emphatically that EPA currently has too much discretion in these enforcement cases and how much money cities have to commit to, and only legislation will change this process where it is more flexible for cities planning to do the environmentally right thing but suffer from lack of money to finance improvements.

Akron (OH) Mayor Donald Plusquellic agreed with Berger that working with the EPA Region 5 was very difficult to deal with. He, along with Monrovia (CA) Mayor Mary Ann Lutz commented that Integrated Planning can be applied to EPA permit and enforcement programs, but EPA would retain wide discretion of EPA – and that is why legislation is needed to codify Integrated Planning Framework and make it available to all cities.

The city can delay spending on non-human contact SSOs with no human health impacts, and instead focus on upgrading and expanding the wastewater treatment facility that will more than double the capacity from 30 MGD to 70 MGD. And, the city can reopen the decree if economic conditions change in Lima.” – Lima Mayor David Berger

Digital Transformation – The Future of Municipal Services

Fathom Chairman and CEO Trevor Hill, a new Associate Member of the Water Development Advisory Board (WDAB), presented information on Smart Grid technologies and how they are transforming water utilities into more efficient systems. Fathom created a single digital platform that integrates all system technologies so that it can generate “actionable information” for operators and customers to manage systems with better knowledge and take advantage of efficiencies that save time and money. Hill commented that most (not all) water utilities in the US are relatively small and seldom achieve economies of scale. Utility back offices, for example, deal with billing and customer engagement and are generally more expensive and provide less functional service than digital-smart grip approaches. Fathom’s platform can service tens of millions of meters with a single coordinating platform that can extract information for use by operators. He cited demonstrated successes in using the platform to find leaking pipes, conserve water by educating consumers, allowing customers to engage and pay bill via mobile phone apps, etc.

City Progress on Water Infrastructure

David Gadis of Veolia Water presented information on Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) and how they are helping cities. Gadis said the water issues stated in the Mayors Roundtable are all familiar to him and the other water companies working with the Mayors Water Council. In fact, it is the private water sector’s experience with these issues in so many cities that it is easy for them to use that experience to address a current city water problem.

Gadis advised mayors to be wary of anti-P3 groups that make unsubstantiated claims against private water companies working with cities. One item is ownership, and as long as the public partner retains ownership of an asset the arrangement is not privatization. He also cited anti-P3 organizations who claim private water companies make undue profits from public water systems. He challenged this perspective and advised mayors to examine modern service agreements and they could also challenge the assumption of high profit. His final remark was that the “status quo” of public water will not remain static due to social and financial pressures, and this will force change – and those resisting change should be heard but should also be accountable for what the asset in a transparent manner.

National Association of Water Companies (NAWC) Executive Director Michael Deane offered insights on how the private sector can help cities with progress on infrastructure as well as efficient operations of public water systems. According to Deane, “Each city has to decide if a P3 makes sense for them or not.” Making decisions about the form of service delivery, Deane said, “What mayors, city councils, citizens and the media need to see a very transparent process with good information from reputable sources.” NAWC can provide credible scientific and economic information on P3s taken from actual projects that have demonstrated public benefits.

The Integrated Planning Framework, Affordability

Lima (OH) Mayor David Berger recently finalized their EPA consent decree using an Integrated Planning approach, and commitments were made to spend $150 million over 28 years. He said that the city got the best deal they could, and that the city was able to center the plan in setting priorities and matching spending on those priorities over time. Lima has one of the most flexible consent decrees addressing stormwater and overflows. Berger stated, “The city can delay spending on non-human contact SSOs with no human health impacts, and instead focus on upgrading and expanding the wastewater treatment facility that will more than double the capacity from 30 MGD to 70 MGD. And, the city can reopen the decree if economic conditions change in Lima.”
Six Cities Share $445,000 in Grants to Combat Childhood Obesity, Courtesy of USCM, ABA

The United States Conference of Mayors announced the winners of the 2014 Childhood Obesity Prevention Awards on January 22 during its 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington (DC). A total of $445,000 was awarded to cities with outstanding programs that encourage young people to make healthy and balanced diet choices, and to engage in regular physical activity. An independent panel of judges evaluated applicants and selected the winning programs based on innovation, creativity, potential for replication and ability to make a long-range impact.

Awards were made in three categories—small, medium and large city, with top winners in each category receiving grant awards of $100,000, $120,000, and $150,000 respectively.

**Small City – Lima: Cooking for Change**

Cooking for Change will bring together high school students from the food management program at Lima Senior High School and the culinary arts program at Apollo Career Center to design and develop a healthy eating initiative that will reduce obesity rates in Lima and Allen County. The program includes a competition in which teams of high school students across the country take on the challenge of creating a delicious, nutritious school meal for $1 per meal.

**Medium City – New Haven: Neighborhood Matters!**

**New Haven (NMNH)**

Neighborhood Matters! New Haven’ (NMNH) is a partnership between the City of New Haven and Yale University that consists of two main components: Cooking Matters, a school and neighborhood-based nutrition education program that will provide nutrition education and training in healthy cooking to children and families; and a neighborhood-based, family oriented physical activities program that will promote increased physical activity and a more active lifestyle in general among the children and their families in the community.

**Large City – Jacksonville: Let’s Move Jacksonville and Healthy Corner Stores**

The project will establish two Healthy Corner Stores in existing food deserts in As a youth-developed and youth-led initiative, young people will partner not only with corner store owners but with churches and community organizations, and local farmers’ markets to make fresh fruits and vegetables available to community residents at a reduced cost, as well as implement a number of fitness and educational initiatives.

Second Place or Outstanding Achievement awards of $25,000 each are also made in each category and went to North Miami (small city) for “Let’s Move North Miami,” Green Bay (medium city) for “Live54218,” and Seattle (large city) for the “Seattle Farm-To-Table (F2T) Partnership.”

The Childhood Obesity Prevention Awards are presented by the Conference of Mayors in partnership with the American Beverage Association (ABA), to support and/or enhance mayors’ ongoing childhood obesity prevention programs in their cities. The program also includes a national public awareness campaign, and connects mayors with innovative, cost-effective strategies to successfully reduce childhood obesity in their cities.

For more information on the USCM/ABA Childhood Obesity Prevention Awards, current and past winners, and other childhood obesity prevention resources for mayors and cities, visit the website www.usmayors.org/childhoodobesity.

Left to right, USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran; USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, North Miami Fourth District Councilwoman Erlande Steril, 2nd place winner in Small City category North Miami Mayor Dr. Smith Joseph, 2nd place winner in the Large City category Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, 2nd place winner in the Medium City category Green Bay Mayor James J. Schmitt, American Beverage Association President and CEO Susan Neely, and USCM 2nd Vice President Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett.

Left to right, USCM Past President Trenton Mayor Doug Palmer, USCM Past President Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr., USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, 1st place winner in Large City category Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, American Beverage Association President and CEO Susan Neely, USCM Past President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz, USCM Past President former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb, USCM Past President former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, and former U.S. Congressman former Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums.

Left to right, USCM Past President Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr., USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran, 1st place winner in Medium City category New Haven Mayor Toni Harp, American Beverage Association President and CEO Susan Neely, and USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson.
$3 Million
CommunityWINS
Grant Program
Over Three
Years to Support
Neighborhood
Revitalization,
Economic
Development, Job
Creation in Local
Municipalities

During the 83rd Winter Meeting, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Wells Fargo announced a new collaboration, the CommunityWINS grant program, aimed at accelerating neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and job creation in municipalities across the country. Wells Fargo Executive Vice President Mary Coffin made the announcement to mayors at the opening plenary luncheon.

The CommunityWINS grant program will include a $3 million investment by the Wells Fargo Foundation over three years. “This Wells Fargo grant program is a great example of how the private and public sectors can work together to bring real solutions to help address local economic challenges in cities,” said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. “Wells Fargo and our members share a deep-rooted commitment to communities all across the country and we are thrilled that CommunityWINS will help to spur economic recovery in many cities.”

Through a competitive application process, the Conference of Mayors will determine eligibility and administer grant funds to eligible nonprofits in six cities that support neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and job creation initiatives. “We are delighted to once again team-up with the U.S. Conference of Mayors with funding from the Wells Fargo Foundation and offer expertise through our Leading the Way Home®, LIFT and now CommunityWINS programs,” said Coffin, Head of Customer Excellence at Wells Fargo Home Lending. “Wells Fargo believes it is important to support our communities and nonprofits in their tireless efforts to help accelerate local economic recovery.

Together, our collaboration strengthens the communities in which we live, work and grow.” Conference of Mayors member cities can nominate up to three eligible nonprofit initiatives or programs that address one of the following categories:

- Neighborhood stabilization – projects designed to stimulate growth and stability while assisting in the removal of blight and the rebuilding of neighborhoods.
- Economic development – projects designed to promote business development.
- Job creation – projects designed to aid in local job creation or assist in job training.

Grant requirements, application details, application checklists, and the online application forms are available now at usmayors.org/communitywins and applications must be submitted by March 16.

The CommunityWINS grant program collaboration between the Conference of Mayors and Wells Fargo follows a national alliance formed in 2011 to address foreclosure prevention, property disposition, homeownership promotion and community development. The three-year alliance focused on outreach and addressing housing challenges through strategies developed by Wells Fargo.
Uber’s Plouffe Discusses Sharing Economy, Politics with Conference of Mayors President Johnson

By David W. Burns

Uber Senior Vice President for Policy and Strategy David Plouffe sat down for an interview with USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson during the Thursday Morning Plenary session at the 83rd Winter Meeting, to discuss a wide range of topics including politics and Uber’s relationship with cities.

Plouffe spent much of the time discussing the Uber model and its impact on cities. Uber is a transportation network company which pairs up riders with available drivers who drive when they want to. “I think this has an opportunity to transform transportation and our cities,” said Plouffe.

“Many people are driving cars to augment their income,” said Plouffe. “I spent a lot of time in the White House trying to grow incomes. What you see with Uber is that it’s a really great way to make some income with additional flexibility.”

Data also was a big discussion point for Plouffe. Part of this discussion featured the recent partnership with Boston, where anonymous rider data will be accessible by the city. This data will help city planners, the transportation department, and others better understand transit patterns and traffic flow. “You can make smart decisions around planning and we want to have those conversations with you,” said Plouffe.

Plouffe’s remarks came on the heels of the release of its Uber Driver-Partners Study, which attempts to paint a picture of what an Uber driver looks like and what draws people to the work. The big take away from the study is that drivers are attracted to the work through the flexibility offered through being a driver. “We should be encouraging this in a safe way, in a transparent way,” he said. The discussion of regulations in cities was also a major point of conversation. Plouffe remarked, “We have worked with local officials to pass new regulations.” Plouffe continued, “Let’s pass regulations that are forward-looking, that encourage economic opportunity, but in many cases have stronger security or background checks and insurance requirements than those currently under the law. We are eager to be properly regulated.”

Plouffe also discussed his previous career, Campaign Manager for President Barack Obama’s historic presidential run in 2008 along with his role as Senior Advisor to the President inside the Administration. When asked about his involvement with the White House today he shared a bit from Hotel California, remarking, “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave.”

You may watch the entire interview on usmayors.org/83rdWinterMeeting.

Messaging Expert Frank Luntz Calls for Empathy, Results

By Paul Leroux

At the request of Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Washington messaging expert Dr. Frank Luntz taught a brief lesson on priorities and communications for America’s mayors during the 83rd Winter Meeting. Appearing pro bono for yet another Conference of Mayors gathering, Luntz praised mayors for their leadership and accountability in an otherwise stagnant political environment. Addressing national political attitudes, Luntz said, “The only people that they have faith in, the only people that they think can lead, are the people in this room.” To keep public trust, he urged the mayors to focus on relating to their constituents’ experiences and delivering tangible outcomes.

With regard to empathy, Luntz noted that a number of Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck, and very few have time for partisanship or ideology. “Of all the things that the public is looking for...there are simple day-to-day concerns that matter to them,” he said. “It isn’t philosophy, it isn’t policy, it’s what happens to you in that day-to-day existence.” Luntz asked mayors to relate everything they do to their constituents’ daily experiences, focusing on quality of life, rather than the source of a particular idea. One way to develop empathy, Luntz said, is to host town halls and ask citizens to speak first. Then, to better relate to these concerns, Luntz urged mayors to use phrases like “you deserve” and “imagine” when directly addressing individuals.

Luntz also urged mayors to focus on pragmatic solutions to problems. “Every time you talk about a problem from this point forward, you need to provide a solution.” He went on that mayors would be held accountable for the solutions they offered, and that keeping promises was essential for their continued success and public trust. “If you make a promise that you don’t keep, they have a chance to hold you accountable,” he said. Luntz recommended that mayors each develop a “got it done checklist” to hold themselves accountable.

Luntz has appeared frequently at gatherings of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, often providing strategic guidance during leadership sessions. At this meeting, he spoke immediately following Johnson’s first ever State of the Cities Address on January 21.

“The only people that they have faith in, the only people that they think can lead, are the people in this room.”

– Frank Luntz
Building Entrepreneurship Spirit Focus of Small Business Task Force

By Tom McClimon

Under the leadership of Conference of Mayors Past President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz, Co-Chair of the Small Business, Franchising and Entrepreneurship Task Force, mayors heard a variety of ideas on steps they can take in their communities to promote the growth of entrepreneurship.

First, American Management Services Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Louis Mosca, a Conference of Mayors Platinum Partner, discussed with the mayors the results of a recent poll of small business owners which showed that while they felt the economy was improving, they didn’t feel that mayors understood their challenges. To combat this feeling, Mosca suggested that the mayors make small business relationships a higher priority by visiting their locations, appointing a small business ambassador on their behalf, and using us Partner America, the Conference of Mayors small business assistance program.

Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, himself a successful entrepreneur, discussed how his city promotes the entrepreneurial spirit by having a goal of going from “red tape to green tape.” The mayor has established an eco system for entrepreneurship, which encourages the city to “celebrate” entrepreneurship as well as help them to “escalate” their business.

Google Inc. Senior Policy Advisor Jenny Backus discussed the various programs Google offers to assist small businesses. She pointed out that 55 percent of small businesses nationwide are not listed online. She encouraged mayors to create websites and tech hubs to assist budding entrepreneurs start up and grow their businesses.

Education and Diversity Senior Director Miriam Brewer gave the mayors an update on the regional training seminars being hosted by the International Franchise Association.

Cities’ Sports Challenges Addressed at MPSA

Chaired by Indianapolis Mayor Gregory A. Ballard, the Mayors Professional Sports Alliance (MPSA) discussed how mayors can deal with sports challenges in their cities. New York University’s Tisch Institute for Sports Management, Media and Business Professor Lee Igel explained some of the ways cities have been able to utilize some of their faculty and students to address sports opportunities and challenges. Further collaboration with NYU and other universities, and the revision of the Conference of Mayors’ website on cities and sports was also discussed.

Community Leaders of America: Republican Mayors

Left to right, Garland Mayor Douglas Athas, House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions (TX), and Community Leaders of America (CLA) Chairman Albuquerque Mayor Richard J. Berry.
Mayors Highlight, Call for Best Practices in Education

By Megan Cardiff

Chairman Denver Mayor Michael Hancock officially announced the launch of the Conference of Mayors online education playbook, www.usmayors.org/education playbook, during the January 21 meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Educational Excellence Task Force. A year in the making, the online playbook was first revealed at the 2014 Winter Meeting, where task force members adopted four guiding pillars to work on for the year, including: increasing access to high quality early childhood education; increasing the number of high performing seats; keeping students on track to graduate; and ensuring students have access to and complete a post-secondary pathway.

Over the past year, Hancock, with help from other task force members, vetted best practice submissions from cities, regardless of their span of educational control, and highlighted them on the website. “Regardless of the role you play in your city, this website can be used as a toolkit to help mayors and their staff see what other mayors are doing in their cities and replicate them in their own cities,” said Hancock. The next phase of the submission process for the Education Mayors Online Playbook is now underway. The deadline for submitting your initiative for the Playbook is February 27. To learn more about the Playbook, or submit an idea, visit: www.usmayors.org/educationalexcellence.

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, along with former Secretary of Education and President of the George W. Bush Presidential Center Margaret Spellings, also unveiled the Mayors’ Report Card of Education, which compares and contrasts the status of schools in 33 different cities. George W. Bush Presidential Center Senior Vice President Holly Kuzmich also spoke on the report card and how mayors can use the data to engage their school districts and better collaborate to improve public education.

The report, a scorecard for mayors to use in evaluating their city’s major school district, presents data such as graduation rates, ACT scores, average teacher salaries and early childhood availability. “We are committed to advancing the accountability of our nation’s schools, which starts with making sure that educators and policy-makers have plenty of good information,” said Spellings. “This is a very complimentary project to what the Conference of Mayors is doing with their online playbook.”

All mayors know that every summer cities across the nation all have the same problem: too many students are losing ground on their reading and math skills and when they return to school in September, are further behind when they left in June. To close out the meeting, Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry talked about his city’s efforts to re-invent summer as a time of opportunity for learning. With the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, he has mobilized more than a dozen community partners to collaborate and provide kids with learning opportunities over those summer months. In his remarks, Berry highlighted The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading’s recently released report on the important role mayors around the country are playing in bridging the summer learning loss gap.

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Mayors Learn About New Initiatives at TAPES Committee

By Tom McClimon

The impact of gaming in America’s cities and how the National Park Service plans to incorporate mayors into its centennial celebrations were just two of the new issues discussed by the mayors at the meeting of the Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment and Sports Committee. Chaired by New Orleans Mayor Mitchelle Landrieu, the mayors got the opportunity to key players in the gaming, parks, arts, tourism, and museum fields.

American Gaming Association President and CEO Geoff Freeman discussed how his industry contributes over $250 billion in economic activity in cities. Cities are having to adopt new regulatory actions to keep up with the growing demand for gaming. National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis explained how the National Park Service will be initiating a new campaign “Find Your Park” as part of its centennial events planned for 2015 and 2016. “Find Your Park” will include national, state and local parks and will be aimed at encouraging citizens of all ages to visit a park. Lafayette (LA) International Trade Manager Philippe Gustin discussed the new North American Francophone Network being established and how American cities can participate. This new network will make a strong connection between cities with a strong French heritage. Smithsonian Museum of African American History Donor and Council Relations Senior Manager Tasha Coleman gave the mayors an update on the progress of the new museum and its plans for its opening in 2016. National Endowment for the Arts Director of Design Jason Schupbach gave the mayors an update on NEA’s Our Town program, which provides funds to communities for creative place-making. Americans for the Arts Chief Counsel Nina Ozlu Tunceli presented an update on how arts resolutions passed by the mayors at the 82nd Annual Meeting last June have been implemented.
My Brother’s Keeper Changing Narrative for Men, Boys of Color, Mayors Told

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Top White House officials briefed the mayors on the Administration’s latest efforts relating to My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) during the January 23 meeting of the Conference of Mayors MBK Task Force during the Winter Meeting. That task force is co-chaired by Birmingham Mayor William Bell, Sr. and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter. Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson, who chairs The White House’s My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, talked about the collaborative efforts underway within the Administration around MBK and told the mayors that those efforts have helped them to launch their own efforts in their cities. He thanked the Conference of Mayors for establishing its MBK Task Force and the work that it has been doing.

Johnson explained that MBK is not a big new government program, but that it involves many different agencies and was established by a Presidential memorandum as a public-private initiative. He said that over 150 cities have accepted the community challenge.

In response to concern voiced by one of the mayors about the way men and boys of color are viewed by some in his community, Johnson commented that the MBK initiative is changing the narrative of how the nation perceives boys and young men of color and how they perceive themselves.

Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of Cabinet Affairs for My Brother’s Keeper Michael Smith provided more details on the MBK Community Challenge, which President Obama launched in September. To participate, communities have to agree to accept the President’s Challenge by 1) identifying a staff point of contact and agreeing to develop a plan to accomplish the MBK initiative’s six goals, 2) convening a local action summit to bring key partners together, 3) conducting a policy review & form recommendations for action, and 4) launching a plan of action.

Smith also provided the mayors with information on the substantial contributions that philanthropies and other private sector organizations are making to the MBK effort. He directed the mayors to the Executive’s Alliance, a national philanthropic alliance, and to the publication A Time for Action for more information.

Mayors Learn How Universities Can Help Them

Lead by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, the Mayors and Metro Universities Task Force reconvened for an insightful discussion of how different universities assist cities.

Nearly 20 mayors from large and small communities gleaned useful information from representatives from Harvard University, the University of Texas, New York University, and the State University of New York at Albany. One theme that ran through all of the presentations was that universities provide valuable resources to their cities in a number of ways, for example, access to talented faculty and enthusiastic students (through experiential learning or available to tackle a problem while getting experience relative to their classroom learning) and building tools to analyze and address problems like blight better. The presenters highlighted the importance of mayors and university presidents developing good working relationships that can be relied upon to address specific challenges a city may face at any time. The task force shared the insights of former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, now a visiting professor at the LBJ School, who spoke from her experiences as mayor reaching out to her universities and as a professor where she enjoys a greater “freedom of speech.” A lively discussion ensued following the formal presentations where the mayors around the table shared their experiences – good and bad – working with their universities.
By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson called on mayors to help implement the Department’s new Priority Enforcement Program when he met with the Conference of Mayors Immigration Reform Task Force January 22 during the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting. That task force is co-chaired by Anaheim Mayor Tom Tait and Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra.

Johnson explained that a key element of the Executive Actions the President announced November 20, was the replacement of the controversial Secure Communities program with the Priority Enforcement Program, which will closely and clearly reflect the Department’s new top enforcement priorities. Specifically, the new Priority Enforcement Program will continue to rely on fingerprint-based biometric data submitted during bookings by state and local law enforcement agencies and will identify to law enforcement agencies the specific criteria for which the Department will seek an individual in their custody. Johnson referred to the Priority Enforcement Program a fresh start and said that his agency needs mayors to help implement it by encouraging their police chiefs to work in partnership with federal immigration enforcement personnel to further the shared goal of public safety.

Johnson described several of the other executive actions taken by the President and thanked the Conference of Mayors for its support of executive action and comprehensive immigration reform. He explained that operating under a continuing resolution, as the Department is until February 27, means it cannot undertake any new spending initiatives or release any grant funding for non-disaster programs.

The Secretary responded to questions from a number of mayors, several of whom described specific problems faced by immigrants in their cities.

The task force also heard from U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration Policy and Public Affairs Director Kevin Appleby. Appleby explained that the Bishops support immigration reform because so many Catholics have an immigrant background and so many Catholic facilities serve immigrants every day. He also discussed comprehensive immigration reform as a humanitarian issue and said that it is consistent with the gospel. He indicated that the Bishops support the executive action taken by the Administration, and thanked Secretary Johnson for it.

Appleby called for comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for undocumented individuals, reform of the legal immigration system based on family unity, due process for immigrants who are threatened with deportation but don’t have an opportunity to challenge it in court, and improvements in workplace enforcement. He expressed concern that Congress might pass bills that deal with individual parts of the system and indicated that the Bishops would oppose such a piecemeal approach. “Reform is inevitable,” he said, “but we need to keep the politics right.”
Preventing Domestic Terrorist Incidents Depends on Local Police Intelligence, Mayors Told

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Indicative of the wide range of topics within its jurisdiction, the Criminal and Social Justice Committee, under the leadership of Houston Mayor Annise Parker, discussed issues of marriage equality, intelligence-led policing, and the current domestic terror threat environment at its January 22 meeting during the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting.

Both Homeland Security Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis Kurt Reuther and Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Carlin told the mayors that local officials and law enforcement are absolutely critical to identifying domestic terror threats and deterring incidents. “Your focus on terrorist issues today can save lives,” Carlin told the mayors. “I guarantee that one or more of you will have terrorists in your city over the next year,” he continued. Carlin focused on the threat posed by self-radicalized terrorists, whom he said would likely first be encountered by local law enforcement. He urged mayors and police officials to work in close partnership with the Justice Department and said that preventing attacks by these homegrown terrorists is the Department’s top priority.

Reuther described his agency’s efforts to deter foreign fighters and extremists from entering the country through stepped up border, aviation, and cyber security, but said that the real challenge lies in U.S. domestic space. The Department relies heavily on state and local law enforcement in its efforts to “target and identify people who might be able to do us harm,” he said.

Intelligence-Led Policing

“You can’t police without data; every officer needs it,” former Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis told the mayors. “Getting information out to the police as quickly as possible can save lives,” he continued. Davis talked about the importance of having good information and using data from all inputs [cameras, social media, etc.] to make good decisions.

“It’s a big challenge you’re facing, keeping the crime rate low and increasing trust, and you need to take the latest technology and leverage it to achieve your goals,” Davis commented. He said that Twitter was the only way to get messages out during the Boston Marathon case. Davis was police commissioner in Boston at the time of the 2013 bombing at the Marathon’s finish line.

The mayors took the opportunity to ask Davis his thoughts on several policing strategies, including predictive policing, which uses crime data to predict where crime is likely to occur and preempt it; the High Point concept, which uses family members and other factors to leverage criminals’ decisions and reduce drug dealing; and working with landlords to reduce crime on rental properties. Parker asked Philadelphia Police Commissioner Ramsey, who attended the session, about policies relating to the use of body cameras and he pointed the mayors to a report by the Police Executive Research Forum and the COPS Office which, among other things, recommends having a policy even if a department doesn’t issue body cameras in the event that officers get them themselves.

Freedom to Marry

Freedom to Marry Founder and President Evan Wolfson thanked the Conference of Mayors and mayors individually for their support for freedom to marry and for the resolution passed by the Conference of Mayors last June that reaffirmed support and called on the Supreme Court “to speedily bring national resolution by ruling in favor of the freedom to marry nationwide.”

“Thanks to a chorus of voices, debate, and rich leadership, now the Supreme Court is taking the opportunity to decide [on marriage equality] for all Americans,” Wolfson commented. He urged mayors to speak out in favor of freedom to marry in the coming months and the Conference of Mayors and individual mayors to sign onto an amicus brief that Freedom to Marry is preparing.
New Policy Toward Cuba

In mid-December 2014, President Barack Obama announced the United States new policy of restoration of full diplomatic relations with Cuba. Major goals are to move toward normal travel and trade and to ease investment and financial relations between the two countries.

U.S. Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary for Outreach David D. Duckenfield told the committee that the new policy shows the intent of the Administration to put more into Cuban cities, raise expectations for Outreach David D. Duckenfield, United States and Local Governments (UCLG), Secretary General Josep Roig, International Trade Manager of the Lafayette (LA) International Center Philippe Gustin, International Affairs Standing Committee Chair Alexandria (VA) Mayor William D. Euille, Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemispheric Affairs Ricardo Zuniga, United States and Local Governments (UCLG), Treasurer and Kitchener (Canada) Mayor Berry Vrbanovic, and United States and Local Governments (UCLG), Executive Bureau Member and Liverpool (United Kingdom) Councillor Richard Kemp.

Left to right, USCM Director of Internet Strategy David W. Burns, Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland, San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA), Berkman Center for Internet and Society Co-Director Susan Crawford, and EVP Industries at Salesforce Vivek Kundra.

The new policy toward Cuba is the centerpiece of the way to move forward and will make it harder for the authoritarian structure in Cuba to continue.

The old U.S. policy toward Cuba was more punitive and was not effective. The new policy will make it harder for the Cuban government to point to the U.S. as the “big enemy.” Over time the Cuban people will be able to participate more fully in their own government and their own economy. The new U.S. policy marks the beginning of a long period of change.

The goal is to normalize Cuba. Though Cuba is small and poverty-stricken now, the Administration’s new policy carries the hope of laying the groundwork for a day when there will be more travel between the U.S. and Cuba, more benefits from trade, more communication, and better economic and political results for the Cuban people.

New Network to Highlight French Heritage in U.S., Canadian Cities, Towns, Small Communities

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The Environment Committee, Chaired by Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton, met on January 22 in conjunction with the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting to discuss climate change. Stanton said, “I wanted to focus our discussion on the issue of climate change and resiliency with a specific look at EPA’s Clean Power Plan, the White House’s Climate Change Task Force, the resiliency efforts at each of the Agencies.”

The expert panel included Senior White House Official for the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Michael Boots, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acting Deputy Administrator Stan Meiburg, and former EPA Deputy Administrator and now President of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, Bob Perciasepe.

Boots discussed the three priorities of the Administration which included: cutting carbon pollution; building more resilient communities; and building off those two foundations for the international stage. He discussed how the White House Task Force, which was primarily made up of mayors and governors, provided recommendations and actions that the federal government should be doing and what areas they should “get out of the way.” They are now in the process of aligning those recommendations along with the recommendations that came out of the Super Storm Sandy and will be convening key federal agencies to implement those suggestions.

Another element that the White House is focusing on is protecting infrastructure. The White House Task Force recommended that there should be resilient requirements that were streamlined and that didn’t differ from agency to agency. The TIGER grants will include resiliency requirements which may be a model for other applications. There is also supposed to be $1 billion awarded in the Spring to states and local governments for FEMA-declared sites to rebuild more resilient in order to be prepared for the next big storm.

Meiburg told the mayors that they should “think about climate change as a marathon and not a sprint where everything has a small part and that there is no single bullet.” He stressed that just because the Administration was talking about resiliency it was not a sign that they were “giving up” on efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, EPA just closed the comment period for their “Clean Power Plan” which is their proposed strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for existing power plants. They received over four million comments from interested parties and EPA wants to make sure that whatever final rule comes out has the maximum flexibility but said they are limited by certain boundaries. The final rule is expected to come out this summer.

Perciasepe said, “Mayors are key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparedness and they are leading on these two fronts.” Perciasepe gave some examples including the mayors commitment to the Conference of Mayors Climate Action Plan and pointed out that besides the U.S. Postal Service and FedEx, cities probably have the next biggest set of fleets that would benefit from energy efficiency measures. He also said that since most people live in cities, increasing the energy efficiency standards for new and existing buildings can make a big difference in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Perciasepe told the mayors about the importance that EPA’s Clean Power Plan could play in their communities. “You will have 50 different states who will each be developing their individual plans and cities have skin in that game,” he said. He strongly encouraged them to work with their business community and make sure that their state plans reflected what they were doing in their communities.

By Judy Sheahan

The Environment Committee, Chaired by Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton, met on January 22 in conjunction with the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting to discuss climate change. Stanton said, “I wanted to focus our discussion on the issue of climate change and resiliency with a specific look at EPA’s Clean Power Plan, the White House’s Climate Change Task Force, the resiliency efforts at each of the Agencies.”

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College, Career Readiness Key Education Goals for Mayors

By Kathy Wiggins

In 2012, more than a million additional kids of color graduated from high school and went on to college, Education Secretary Arne Duncan told members of the Jobs, Education and the Workforce Standing Committee at the 83rd Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors. “These kids don’t get educated in Washington, they get educated in your cities and communities, so thank you for doing the hard work,” he said.

Chaired by West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, the committee meeting focused on college and career readiness for America’s students. “There are still huge unmet needs in early education,” Duncan continued. “It’s a totally bipartisan issue in cities and states, not so in DC.” Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should include Early Childhood Education (ECE), according to Duncan. “Equity has to drive our agenda,” he said. “Access to rigorous coursework, high quality teachers, principals, access to high standards, AP classes, STEM classes, and rigorous accountability are all critical. College and career ready is the mark.”

“We have to take politics out of this,” Duncan said in closing. “If we can’t come together behind education, what can we come together behind?”

Exposed to the world of work in high school and middle school is a great way to prevent high school dropout, according to Jobs Committee Vice Chair Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland, who presented on “Why Apprenticeships Matter.” Auto body, woodshop, vet clinic, chemotherapy wig-making, credit unions in schools are all examples of career and technical education (CTE) opportunities she recommended to expose students to the world of work. “We need to put funding behind Career and Technical Education/High School Redesign,” she said. “Invest more in it. Other countries track kids – we should give people options so it’s not either/or but rather both/and so that we have a rich mix of rigorous coursework and CTE programs with rich connections to industry and give kids a choice.” Make sure the curriculum is integrated so they’re housed in the same building, Strickland recommended.

Birmingham Mayor William Bell, Sr., Co-Chair of The U.S. Conference of Mayors My Brothers Keeper Task Force, closed the meeting with an update on the work of the task force. Presenting the findings of a recent survey of task force members, Bell reported the following: 1) 60 percent of survey cities had efforts underway or planned to launch campaigns to actively recruit mentors for youth; 2) 80 percent had efforts underway or planned to make the status and progress of boys and young men of color more visible by improving data collection and transparency; and 3) 80 percent were supporting locally driven efforts to address the educational, physical, social and emotional needs of young people that span multiple life stages from cradle-to-college.

Meal Programs for Children, Mayoral Power to End Homelessness Key Topics in Hunger and Homelessness Task Force

By Eugene T. Lowe

Co-Chair Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider led the Hunger and Homelessness Task Force Meeting with a description of the summer meals programs in her city. She talked about working with kids all through the year but especially during the summer when schools are out and kids don’t have access to food. Working with No Kid Hungry, and the national spokesperson for the program, actor Jeff Bridges, children (some 20,000 are food insecure) are receiving food through the summer free lunch program in Santa Barbara County. Schneider said that in Santa Barbara, food banks, unified school districts, and the local community action commission, 36 locations were found countywide that would serve meals to anyone under 18. No forms had to be filled out or income levels verified, everyone could have a meal. Schneider said that this reduced what could be seen as a stigma or poor kids only coming for a free meal. She added, “This was much more of an open, more inclusive way for families and kids to get together and break bread together.”

Share Our Strength (No Kid Hungry) Senior Director of Research, Advocacy, and Partner Development Duke Storen said that his organization sponsored a 50 state campaign and provides technical assistance and research to end childhood hunger. Storen talked about the health impact of childhood hunger and how hunger is aligned to educational attainment. But he said that mayors can make changes by pulling a “few big levers” and achieve significant outcomes. He says that mayors must be intentional about a plan to end childhood hunger. Mayors must bring the public and private sectors together, the educational sector, businesses, social service agencies and the emergency feeding network. A big strategy is to expand school breakfast. Storen said, “Only about half the kids that could be eating free or reduced price school breakfast are participating.” He added, “Everyone of those meals are paid for by the federal government.”

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Interim Executive Director Matthew Doherty the told the taskforce that at the federal level, “We are focused on ending all homelessness.” He described “Opening Doors,” the federal plan to prevent and end homelessness that was launched in 2010 with four goals: ending chronic homelessness, ending veterans homelessness by the end of 2015, ending youth and family homelessness by 2020. Doherty said, “We are seeing really remarkable progress.” The federal strategic purpose is being replicated in local communities is helping to drive that change. Doherty said between 2010 and 2014 there was a ten percent reduction in overall homelessness and a 25 percent drop in unsheltered homelessness. There was a 15 percent decrease in family homelessness including a 53 percent drop in unsheltered family homelessness. There was a 21 percent reduction in chronic homelessness, including a 23 percent in veteran and 21 percent in unsheltered homelessness. Doherty said “we are expecting to see some dramatic progress” in this year’s annual point in time count to measure progress which is happening this week across the country.
Mayors Focus on Vacant Spaces in Sacred Spaces, Blight Management, Brownfields During Vacant and Abandoned Properties Task Force Session

By Eugene Lowe and Jocelyn Bogen

Task Force Co-Chairs Columbia Mayor Stephen Benjamin and Dubuque Mayor Roy Buol led mayors in a discussion on vacant spaces in sacred spaces, blight management and brownfields during the January 22 meeting of the Vacant and Abandoned Properties Task Force.

Task force members first heard from Wells Fargo Vice President of Community Outreach Karen Lee who discussed the newly launched 2015 Wells Fargo and USCM COMMUNITYWINS Grant program. This grant program is an important opportunity for cities and their non-profit partners to address neighborhood stabilization, economic development, and job creation. Applications and grant requirements are available now at usmayors.org/communitywins. The application deadline is March 16.

Partners for Sacred Places President Robert Jaeger delivered a presentation on how cities are dealing with vacant spaces in sacred places. Many cities have older religious properties with declining memberships, and are in need of strategies to sustain and preserve these important spaces. Jaeger gave examples of how Sacred Places is helping churches of all faiths find uses for the vacant space in their buildings, and advised the mayors to continue to pursue new resources and partnerships that will be of help to the churches and to their communities.

Accela, Inc. Government Relations Director Tim Woodbury briefed the taskforce on how Accela is assisting cities in managing their blighted properties. Cleveland (OH) was showcased for how the city has been able to address their vacant and distressed properties by using the civic platform to track the demolition process, document expenses which aids in transparency, and support cost recovery.

The final speaker, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWHER) Assistant Administrator Mathy Stanislaus, shared EPA’s activities on brownfields and economic development. Stanislaus told the taskforce that he was a “champion of the Brownfields program as a tremendous asset ... of community revitalization of rebuilding downtowns.” He spoke of using resources to “identify the risk, manage those risks to bring to bear public and private financing and planning resources that can reveal what that site’s surrounding areas can really bring in terms of associate infrastructure investment and other kinds of investments to get the highest and maximum use of those properties that matches community vision”

Mayors Act to Create Advanced Manufacturing Hubs

By Paul Leroux and Megan Cardiff

Under the leadership of Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero, the Advanced Manufacturing Task Force spent time developing strategies to expand and attract advanced manufacturing economies in their cities. Convening January 23, the task force also featured Vice Chairs Beaverton Mayor Denny Doyle and Waterbury Mayor Neil M. O’Leary. Common themes of discussion included the maker movement, promotional campaigns, and skills trainings, all of which converge around increasing the high tech jobs available in advanced manufacturing.

Both Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Deputy Director Tom Kalil made presentations on the maker movement, the idea that basic manufacturing equipment and space should be available for small entrepreneurs to utilize. Kalil proposed mechanisms for cities to share ideas with each other, proliferating maker technologies and products. He cited the Dream Factory in Pennsylvania and “economic garden- ing” in Littleton (CO) as two examples.

Fischer argued that maker spaces are part of what’s required to liberate innovative ideas and bring them to life. In Louisville, the city started with an old garage as its original maker space, growing their maker community from six to 200 members and now occupying 30,000 square feet. Fischer also encouraged mayors to look for opportunities to develop and appreciate innovative talent in their communities. “Being a nerd is cool now,” he said.

Fremont Mayor Bill Harrison, a manufacturing city in Silicon Valley, spoke about his city’s campaign to attract and retain manufacturers. According to Harrison, the expansion of Tesla in particular has put Fremont on the map as an advanced manufacturing center. This has led to the, “You think you know Fremont” campaign, done in conjunction with a major Silicon Valley communications company. This involves a targeted sector approach, retaining existing manufacturers, leveraging industry trends, boasting a business friendly environment, creating regional partnerships on workforce and education, and investing in local infrastructure. As a result of Fremont’s long manufacturing history and its recent efforts, there are now 888 firms across 185 industries within the city.

Finally, Mooresville Mayor Miles Atkins spoke on his city’s efforts to train a workforce for advanced manufacturing jobs as they became available. The home of more than 60 NASCAR teams, Mooresville has worked to build on its status as “NASCAR City” by creating partnerships to provide technical skills training. After developing those skills and partnerships, Atkins said, manufacturing retention and expansion becomes, “practically a self-sustaining effort”
Membership Committee Holds Discussion on Local Mayoral Priorities

By Katie Pirolt

The U.S. Conference of Mayors 83rd Winter Meeting again saw a record number of first-time attendee mayors. Over 70 of these mayors came from cities across the country, of all sizes, with backgrounds ranging from medicine to education and law enforcement gathered at the January 21 Membership Standing Committee Meeting to discuss local mayoral priorities and challenges. Standing Committee Chair Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler led the discussion by highlighting benefits of membership, saying, “One of the most significant benefits you’ll get from this meeting is the networking opportunity with 300 of your colleagues and the connections you make with federal officials and business leaders.”

Throughout the session, newly elected mayors had an opportunity to describe their city’s initiatives. Many mayors highlighted the diversity of their communities and successful community policing initiatives. Trenton Mayor Eric Jackson shared his city’s public safety initiatives, saying, “We have implemented targeted police surges, bike patrols, and will hire 12 new recruits with a $1.5 million Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant.” Jackson reported that crime has decreased and they will continue to expand their public safety capacity. East Orange Mayor Lester Taylor also noted that his priorities include public safety and is working to break down the barriers between law enforcement and the community.

North Miami Mayor Smith Joseph reported that crime in his city is at an all-time low since 1979 through the efforts of programs such as the Police Athletic League (PAL), youth jobs, and gun buy-backs. Joseph also talked about the need to build connections with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, saying “I look forward to meeting with HUD officials this week to discuss the resources I can bring back to my city to help with home maintenance, as most homes in North Miami are over 60 years old.”

Water was a common theme among the new mayors, particularly those from California. East Palo Alto Mayor Lisa Yarborough-Gauthier spoke on how water scarcity in the Bay Area has fallen disproportionately on East Palo Alto, a city that has one of the lowest per-capita in water usage. Yarborough-Gauthier said, “We must look to alternatives like purchasing a water allocation and conservation, so that we can move forward with economic and infrastructure development.”

Overall, many mayors touched on the need to provide more services, grow infrastructure, and promote public safety, all while having access to significantly less resources and funds. Central Falls Mayor James Diossa talked about strategies to re-establish and re-invent the city following bankruptcy, citing “new economic development plans including nine new storefronts and high-end lofts,” and plans to reopen a resource office at Central Falls High School and build partnerships with the FBI and State Police.

Wahler concluded the meeting by encouraging mayors to take advantage of the many benefits the Conference of Mayors has to offer, including the award and grant programs, of which over $2.5 million will be awarded to member cities this year. Wahler stated “this is a great way to bring national attention and funds back to your city to support your initiatives and promote innovation.”

Orientation for New Mayors, First Time Attendees

At left, Membership Committee Chair Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler with Membership Committee Vice-Chair Normal Mayor Chris Koos.

More than 70 new mayors and first-time attendees gathered to meet with “veteran” mayors at the January 21 Orientation Session and learn about the organization from Membership Committee Chair Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

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Key Leaders Address Marketplace Fairness, Tax Reform, Other Key Issues at Metro Economies Committee Meeting

By Larry Jones

Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry, Chairman of the Metro Economies Committee, welcomed a huge gathering of mayors and delegates to the committee’s January 22 meeting. He reminded everyone that almost 90 percent of the nation’s population lives in metro areas. He said, “Mayors are innovators. We are really trying to put people to work in our communities and we’re always looking to shop ideas.” Mayors were encouraged to share their ideas so mayors can learn from each other. Berry introduced several key leaders who discussed priority issues facing mayors across the nation.

**Marketplace Fairness**

Assistant Senate Minority Leader Richard Durbin (IL) told mayors the key to the Senate’s passage of the Marketplace Fairness Act was the strong bipartisan working relationship in the Senate between himself, Senators Heidi Heitkamp (ND), Mike Enzi (WY), and Lamar Alexander (TN). Because of their leadership, commitment and hard work, the bill (S. 743) was approved by the Senate on May 6, 2013 by a final vote of 69-27. The proposal, which would enable state and local governments to collect an estimated $26 billion in sales taxes due on Internet and other remote sales, was widely supported by mayors, governors, state legislators, county officials and other local leaders. In addition to bipartisan support, Durbin said, “We had a real trump card, Harry Reid (NV), then the Majority Leader, who was totally committed to this. He said to me ‘I'm going to help you get this to the floor for a vote.’ This was ‘not as easy as it sounds,’” he said since, “we had the opposition of Max Baucus (MT), then Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.”

After the Senate passed the bill, Durbin said it languished in the House for over a year and a half; and in spite of strong support from major retailers, state and local groups, and other stakeholders, “we’ve been unable to move the Republicans in the House.” Durbin told mayors, “This is your job now.” He also warned that instead of taking up the Senate passed bill, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (VA), recently introduced a proposal that would radically change the sales tax system. Durbin explained that under Goodlatte’s proposal, the sales tax would be based on the origin of the seller (the sales tax of the state where the seller is physically located) instead of the residence of the buyer (the sales tax of the state where the buyer resides). He further explained that under the proposal, a consumer could be charged a higher sales tax if the seller is located in a state with a higher sales tax. He criticized the proposal as “an upside down approach that doesn’t make sense.” And he urged mayors to meet with their members of Congress and discuss the importance of passing the Senate version of the Marketplace Fairness Act.

**Economic Growth, Tax Reform**

U.S. Treasury Department Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy Mark Mazur told mayors that the President laid out a number of major themes in his State of the Union speech that will advance economic growth in the years ahead. He said the President “…made the point that the economy as a whole does better when it grows from the middle out rather than from the top down. In essence, a thriving middle class drives economic growth. When the President talked about a middle class economy, he mentioned several specific things: community colleges that are accessible to all, a higher minimum wage for hard working Americans, improvements in the individual income tax system, business tax reform, and making needed investments in infrastructure.” He said the President talked about enhancing child care credits, reforming education tax incentives, labor force participation by married taxpayers, and improved retirement savings so that Americans can set aside enough earnings during their working years to sustain themselves during their retirement. All of these proposals are fully paid for in the President’s proposed budget for 2016; and will be explained in greater details when the new budget is released on February 2.

**Moving Toward a More Entrepreneurial Economy**

Kaufmann Foundation Vice President for Research and Policy Dane Stangler told mayors that the Foundation is partnering with a number of cities, including Albuquerque, to work on fostering a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. “One of the principle findings that emerged from our research and of those we work with, is that entrepreneurs create all the jobs in your cities, states and in the country,” he said. The Kaufmann Foundation performs a variety of research, programming, and policy analysis to assist local governments in deciding what works and what doesn’t work in terms of entrepreneurial ecosystems. “When we talk about where we want the new jobs to come from, the new jobs and the innovations, that comes from entrepreneurs—new companies, young companies and growing companies,” he said. It was pointed out that Kaufmann has a lot of resources to help cities find the entrepreneurial ecosystem that addresses their needs.

**Pension, New GASB Standards**

Government Accounting Standards Board Chairman David Vaught provided mayors an overview of new pension reporting standards and what unfunded pension standards could mean for their finances in the future. He said governments will have to start reporting based on these new standards starting on June 30. The key thing to remember is the new pension standards look at the employee’s life of service and whether the pension benefits earned are sufficient to pay the estimated liability. These new standards cover both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. He said, “Obviously, the real issue is the defined benefit side.” One of the major changes is that the “net pension liability is going to appear on the face of your government-wide financial statement. This used to be in the footnotes but will appear as a liability in the financial statement,” he said.

Metro Economies Committee Chairman Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry, right, with Metro Economies Committee Vice Chairman Racine Mayor John Dickert, center, great Assistant Senate Minority Leader Richard Durbin, who spoke at the committee’s January 22 meeting.
Funding, Health Care, Career Transition, Ending Homelessness Discussed at Veterans Affairs Task Force Meeting

By Larry Jones

Veterans Affairs Task Force Co-Chair Rochester (MN) Mayor Ardell Brede welcomed mayors and delegates to the January 22 task force meeting and introduced several key leaders who discussed several critical issues facing our nation’s veterans.

Funding for Veterans

Congressman Charlie Dent, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, told mayors that his role is to make sure there is adequate funding in the federal budget to meet the nation’s obligations to our veterans. He said the omnibus spending bill approved by Congress last year includes $159 billion for Veterans Affairs in Fiscal Year 2015, $65 billion for discretionary programs and $94 billion for mandatory programs. He said Congress also passed the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act to improve access and quality of care for veterans in the aftermath of reports of veterans dying before receiving access to needed health care at the VA (Veterans Administration) hospital in Phoenix and other areas around the nation. He said the omnibus bill includes $10 billion for the Veterans Choice Fund to provide increased access to non-VA care, $8.7 billion to reduce the backlog of claims at VA medical facilities, and $1.2 billion to fund the construction, operation and maintenance of military family housing.

Health Care

Dr. Jim Tuchschmidt, Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, discuss some of the key challenges facing the VA in providing access to quality health care to veterans. Overall he said the cost of health care in America is the highest of any industrialized country. He said, “The quality of care and the average cost of care is very high at the VA. But all of that is meaningless if you can’t get in the system in the first place.” He explained that access to health care for veterans is a huge challenge when major health insurers like Keiser Permanente do not sell health insurance to people in places where they have no assets to take care of them. But, he said, “If you serve honorably in our military, you have earned certain health benefits from the VA and it doesn’t matter where you live in this country.” Since May of last year, he said the VA has added enormous amounts of appointments in the system. “Today 98 percent of all of our completed appointments have occurred within 30 days.

Transition Assistance

Dr. Susan Kelly, Director of the Transition to Veterans Program Office at the U.S. Department of Defense, told mayors that more than 200,000 service men and women are leaving the armed forces every year. “That is a tremendous flow of talent into the nation every year and they are headed your way,” she said. Kelly explained that the Defense Department has joined forces with several federal agencies including the Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, Small Business Administration and the Office of Personnel Management to create a very successful partnership to help service members meet career readiness standards. These standards help service members focus on a number of critical areas including training, housing, child care, health care that will help them make the transition back into local communities.

Ending Veteran Homelessness

Matthew Doherty, interim Executive Director at the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, told mayors about the good news that has effectively ended all veteran homelessness. He said the city of New Orleans has effectively ended all veteran homelessness and that 450 mayors across the nation have accepted First Lady Michelle Obama’s challenge to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015.

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Youth Violence, Heroin Epidemic Top Issues for Children, Health and Human Services Committee

By Crystal D. Swann

“We deserve a city that supports children, health and human services,” stated Green Bay Mayor James Schmitt as he opened the official meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The health and wellbeing of children dominated the committee meeting discussions as they heard from speakers are such diverse issues as physical activity, heroin abuse and youth violence.

Introducing UNICEF Kid Power–A Movement Powered by Kids

Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson stopped by the committee to introduce the first speaker. U.S. Fund for UNICEF President and CEO Caryl Stern armed with date points from a recent pilot program in Sacramento shared with the mayors and gathered guests her program “UNICEF Kid Power–A Movement Powered by Kids.” The initiative is powered by the fact that according to UNICEF data, one in four kids in America are inactive and one in four kids worldwide is severely malnourished. Using these simple facts, the project inspired American kids to get active and healthy by tying their physical activity points to charitable giving worldwide that feed malnourished children. “The program helps the child not only get more active but they learn about kids around the world,” remarked Stern.

In an independent study on the Sacramento pilot project, they found that kids who did participate were 58 percent more active than those who did not. The way it works is that The Kid Power sponsors convert power points (kids activity points), into dollars to procure and deliver therapeutic food to malnourished kids worldwide. The goal of the program is that by 2017 there will be one million American kids saving the lives of one million malnourished children around the world. For information and to see a video on the program, go to the website http://www.unicefkidpower.org/.

Public Safety as Health Policy

GrassROOTS Community Foundation President Dr. Janice Johnson Dais and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka spoke with the mayors about the necessity of reframing violence as a public health issue. “We need a reframing of public safety, we need to begin by conceptualizing public safety as a core health issues, remarked Johnson Dais. In her remarks Johnson-Dais posited that if cities begin to think about violence as a public health concern that will fundamentally change the strategies used to address the problem. By approaching violence as a disease, the questions for investigation begin to shift to the source of the problem, models (modes) of transmission and the most vulnerable or susceptible populations. Additionally a systematic approach would be required to address the problem. Cities would begin to document and characterize the burden of violence; assess the effectiveness of programs, with particular attention to women and children and community-based initiatives and would be begin to promote activities to tackle the problem.

Baraka concluded by inviting the mayors to accept the premise that “all policy is public health policy” and that through this lens a scientific model emerges to address the social challenges many cities face including the scourge of young violence. In Newark, a ten-year study in partnership with Rutgers University and others revealed that violence like disease moves. “What we’ve been doing in Newark is finding out where crime is going to move to next,” stated Baraka. She shared that in Newark, they are implementing a three-pronged approach to tackle the disease – creating new sources of opportunity by transforming neighborhoods and schools; interrupting the mode of transmission by limiting access to guns and drugs; and reducing susceptibility by revitalizing small businesses and increasing educational opportunities. What the city has done is tackle whole neighborhoods that may be “infected” as revitalization opportunities by tearing down abandoned housing, working with community based organizations on afterschool care programs, and reduction access to guns and drugs in those areas.

Heroin Epidemic in U.S. Cities

Schmitt, in opening remarks for the next topic, acknowledged that heroin and overdose is a growing program in Green Bay as it is in many cities in the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse and Treatment Deputy Director Dr. Kimberly Leonard spoke with the mayor about what the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is doing to help cities and states address the intersection of pain, prescription drugs and heroin. The face of the typical heroin abuser has changed dramatically over time. In recent studies published in JAMA Psychiatry in late May found that compared with previous generations of heroin users, today’s typical heroin addict starts using at 23, is more likely to live in the affluent suburbs and was likely unwittingly led to heroin through pain killers prescribed by his or her doctor.

Leonard acknowledged that what is also complicating “prescription drug–heroin equation, is the fact that chronic pain is a major health issue in the U.S. with over 100 million adults reporting chronic pain conditions; and as a public health problem pain costs the U.S. an estimated $560-$635 billion annually.

“Because of the intertwined nature of pain, prescription drugs and heroin, it is critical that cities, states, and other jurisdictions adopt solutions that address these linkages and interdependencies,” Leonard stated. She went on to describe the steps SAMHSA and other federal agencies are taking to combat this epidemic. She also remarked that the epidemiological data support a critical insight – a major source of pain relievers for nonmedical use is not via street sales, but by access to medications obtained by friends and family through prescription. “SAMHSA knows that mayors serve a special function in identifying community needs – your closeness to your communities and your position on the frontlines of current and emergent public health and safety issues means that you provide real-time feedback on emerging challenges and the effectiveness of community programs,” concluded Leonard.
Transportation Secretary Foxx Challenges Mayors to Improve Pedestrian, Bicycle Safety

By Kevin McCarty

Transportation and Communications Committee Chair Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed convened his colleagues during the Conference of Mayors 83rd Winter Meeting for a committee session where Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx spoke to mayors and challenged them to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists on city streets.

Reed praised Foxx for his leadership, especially his efforts to build support nationwide for Congressional action on a multi-year surface transportation renewal law. Greeted by a standing ovation, Foxx focused his remarks on road-safety, citing fatality data in calling for more local action to protect pedestrians, bicyclists and assistive mobility device users as part of his department’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Initiative.

At the January 22 session, Foxx used the occasion to launch a “Mayor’s Challenge,” to prompt more mayors and other local elected officials to act on pedestrian and bicycle safety. For the period 2009-2013, Foxx reported that bicycle deaths increased by 15 percent and pedestrian deaths by 16 percent, with many of these fatalities occurring in cities.

With his tenure as mayor of Charlotte shaping his views, Foxx recounted an accident where two young brothers were killed on a street with no sidewalks or shoulders. “It really informed the community, and me, because it spoke to the type of infrastructure that communities need in order for people to travel safely by foot or by bicycle.”

In explaining the Mayor’s Challenge that encourages action on seven strategies, Foxx said, “I’m asking you to commit to use our department as a resource.” He then reminded mayors that the challenge was not about funding but about using “best practices” and improving local infrastructure over time. “We want as many city leaders to commit to this challenge. This is truly the place where working together between federal and local can make a difference.” Foxx announced that a summit would be held in March to further engage local elected officials as they work over the next year in their cities.

Mayors Engage Foxx on Key Concerns

Panel vice chairs led off a discussion with Foxx on a number of transportation priorities, with Portland Mayor Charlie Hales explaining how small categories of federal funding (e.g., “Small Starts”) or TIGER grants) are moving cities forward on transit and “helping them get over the hump.” In his response, Foxx noted that another round of TIGER grants, totaling about $300 million, would be awarded in this fiscal year.

Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges, the new Vice Chair for Transit, said beyond the conversation about transit orient- ed development or TOD, there is also development-oriented transit, asking the Secretary if there is an advantage to cities that prioritize investment in transit in places to spur development. Foxx discussed how transportation investments can be transformative, and how TIGER grants are used to further such projects.

The importance of infrastructure investment. Dow provided an overview of his industry, indicating that nearly $2.1 trillion in economic output is attributable to travel and tourism. The travel industry, he noted, is a top economic driver for most cities and regions.

Dow also discussed the need for investment in airport improvements to keep pace with the growth in passengers and to improve traveler experience, citing data on airline on-time performance to call attention to the immediacy of the challenges before travelers and cities and their regions. “The FAA predicts that 27 airports won’t have enough capacity to meet demand by 2023,” he said, adding that travelers skipped nearly 38 million trips in 2013 due to hassles at the airport. “In 2013 alone, travel cancellations and delays dealt a $32.7 billion blow to the overall U.S. economy,” Dow said.

“The travel industry is essential to our economy. It is the backbone of our economy.” Dow told mayors. In the midst of global travel boom, Dow said it was important to attract more international travelers and secure the economic benefits for cities and the U.S. economy. “They stay longer and spend more,” he said. Attracting a larger share of international travel and serving growing travel within the U.S., Dow explained, will require more investment in airport infrastructure, supported by increased Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs) and other measures.

Committee session participants also heard remarks from Road Safe America President Steve Owings, a for-profit organization that has championed reforms of the trucking industry to improve highway safety. Owings spoke to the need for actions to reduce fatalities and injuries from commercial truck crashes that claim about 4,000 lives and result in about 100,000 injuries each year. He thanked mayors for their support of a recent policy resolution calling for speed governors on trucks, urging the Conference of Mayors to continue to make this a safety priority.

Outlining a three-point agenda of additional safety measures for the trucking industry, Owings first talked about the need to eliminate the exception from the opioid drug rule that is only granted to truck drivers. As a result, drivers with prescriptions for drugs such as Valium and Oxycodeone are allowed to operate commercial trucks, a practice that is illegal in all other transportation sectors. Another change is to raise the insurance minimums for trucks involved in accidents; the current insurance minimums have not been increased since the early 80s and are not even adjusted for inflation. Finally, Owings talked about reforming compensation systems, moving away from paying truck drivers by the mile and toward hourly rates to promote greater safety.
Climate Task Force Reviews Recommendations to President Obama on Resilience, Preparedness, Other Priorities

By Kevin McCarty

Carmel (IN) Mayor James Brainard and Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch convened the Energy, Independence and Climate Protection Task Force where the two leaders briefed mayors and other participants on key climate priorities during the Conference of Mayors 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington (DC).

At the January 21 session, task force co-chair Brainard led a discussion on the President’s State, Local and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Resilience and Preparedness, which issued its final recommendations to the President late last year. The 26-member task force presented their recommendations at a White House meeting November 2014 with Vice President Joe Biden and other senior Administration officials, offering proposals on how the federal government can modernize programs and policies to incorporate climate change, incentivize and remove barriers to community resilience, and provide actionable information and tools.

A member of the Presidential panel, Brainard praised the process and the final recommendations, urging his colleagues to review the final report and other information from the year-long process, assuring them it would be useful to their local efforts.

Finch, who serves as the task force’s other co-chair, discussed his energy and climate work, citing his city’s BG Green 2020 Initiative and Eco-Industrial Park. Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, in his State of the Cities address opening the Winter Meeting, recognized Finch and his success in creating jobs and expanding economic activity at the Eco-Industrial Park.

The extensive use of fuel cell technology at the site makes it the largest single deployment of fuel cells in North America. Finch said he intends to have more discussion of fuel cells at a future task force meeting. In talking about his efforts in his city, Finch said, “Bridgeport will win the race to zero waste.”

Before adjourning, Brainard echoed the process, assuring them it would be useful to their local efforts.

New IRS Ruling on Community Health Benefits, Child Nutrition Reauthorization Top Agenda for Food Policy Task Force

By Crystal D. Swann

The U.S. Conference of Mayors Food Policy Task Force convened January 22 under the leadership of Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, chair. The task force heard from U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon and FRAC President Jim Weill. In his opening remarks Soglin reported hearing from retired teachers about the impact of hunger on learning. Discussion items ranged from the health and education impacts of federal nutrition programs, to policies and practices cities can foster to maximize the federal resources available through those programs.

Concannon described the success many school districts have had using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to get school meals to all students. The new CEP allows high poverty schools to offer both breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students while eliminating the traditional school meal application process. CEP benefits students and the school nutrition department’s bottom line—it increases participation in the school nutrition programs by offering breakfast and lunch for free to all, reduces administrative work for school districts by eliminating the need to qualify students for free and reduced-price meals and track which children are participating; and improves the overall financial viability of the school nutrition programs in high poverty schools.

In addition, Concannon shared with the mayors a new opportunity to work with local not-for-profit hospitals in their cities to support food and nutrition programs. The Internal Revenue Service has ruled that nonprofit hospitals through-out the country will be able to claim the help they provide their communities to “ensure adequate nutrition” as part of their exemption from federal taxation. The ruling was issued on December 31 as a directive to hospitals to comply with the Affordable Care Act. It means hospitals may be able to claim tax credit for programs to reduce the cost of fruits and vegetables in farmers markets and grocery stores and prescriptions that substitute healthier foods for medicine and even help defray the higher costs of healthier school meals, according to advocates. In Cleveland (OH), the local not-for-profit hospital runs local farmer’s markets.

In his comments, Weill noted that work ahead includes both strengthening the nutrition safety net during Child Nutrition Reauthorization and protecting supplement nutrition assistance program (SNAP), school meals standards, and women, infant and children program (WIC) from harmful proposals, particularly during the budget process. The task force also heard from Jason Schneider, senior professional staff with ranking member Debbie Stabenow, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee with and Julian Baer, professional staff with Chairman Pat Roberts, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.
Energy Committee Tackles Key Energy Issues Including
Hydraulic Fracturing, Off-Shore Wind Development

By Debra DeHaney-Howard

Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis convened the Conference of Mayors Energy Standing Committee January 21, where mayors discussed key energy issues before the committee including hydraulic fracturing or “fracking”, offshore wind development, and energy technology. Panel members also engaged in discussion with U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Ernest Moniz and Philips Lighting Vice President for Professional End User Sales Stacy Gillen.

In his remarks to the mayors, Moniz gave a detailed account of progress made by the Administration to move to a clean energy economy. He touted the Energy Department’s investments in energy technology including vehicle technologies, advance lighting technologies and others for driving the costs down, making items such as electric vehicles and LED lights more affordable. “The Energy Department’s investments have had a major impact on the industry, driving down costs for consumers and reducing carbon emissions,” said Moniz. “These projects will continue America’s leadership in building safe, reliable, and clean energy economy.”

Moniz also reported that the Energy Department’s Quadrennial Energy Review (QER)—a comprehensive document that addresses energy infrastructure and federal energy policy—will be released this month. Specifically, the QER identifies the threats, risks and opportunities for energy in the United States.

When asked about funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) in the President’s FY ’16 budget, Moniz acknowledged on “Fracking” funding,” said Wahler.

Watts Shares Denton’s Story on “Fracking”

Denton Mayor Chris Watts, Vice Chair of the Energy Committee, told members of the committee that less than 12 hours after voters on November 4, 2014 approved by 60 percent the banning of hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” within the city limits, two lawsuits were filed against the city by the Texas General Land Office and the state’s biggest petroleum group. Watts stated that the impetus for the citizen-led campaign against fracking was not only the close proximity of gas wells to residential areas but major concerns about water contamination and earthquakes.

Denton, one of the more conservative cities in Texas with more than 120,000 residents covering close to 100 square miles, is the first city in Texas to ban hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” — a process used to extract natural gas and oil from shale rock. Watts noted that Denton has 295 gas wells due to the location of the Barnett Shale, which lies underneath Denton and is known as one of the largest natural gas fields in the United States. While not sharing his position, Watts said, “As mayor my job is to support and defend what the residents of Denton want and what they want is for me to defend the ordinance.”

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell led the discussion on offshore wind projects, reporting that the first offshore wind project came from Denmark and now 28 percent of Denmark’s energy now comes from wind. Mitchell also said, “There are no offshore wind farms in the U.S., but governors on the East Coast, particularly from Massachusetts have been a leader in the field.” Mitchell reported that offshore wind will be “another tool for cities” as they continue to look for alternative energy sources, noting that progress, however, “will be slow without the federal tax credits.”

Hinesville Mayor James Thomas stated that in Georgia there is “heavy public pressure against wind farms” because of the perceived interference with fishing, water sports, and tourism.

Philips Renews Commitment to Mayors’ Lighting Partnership

Gillen announced during her opening remarks that Philips has renewed its commitment to the Conference of Mayors and the Mayors’ Lighting Partnership for the next three years. “We look forward to continuing to work together to provide mayors with access to innovative lighting technologies that can lower energy and operating costs in your city’s buildings and outdoor spaces, while creating beautiful, vibrant platforms for economic growth,” said Gillen.

Speaking to Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson’s Cities 3.0 theme, Gillen said, “We, at Philips, have had the privilege of seeing first hand as we partner with mayors across the country. Mayors truly are leading the way, actively implementing innovative solutions that improve their city services and infrastructure while strengthening the economies of their cities.”

Gillen also unveiled Philips’ new model of providing lighting-as-a-service. Through this new model, cities will be able to not only buy the light fixtures but also the controls and the software that run them complete with services, customized to meet the city’s specific energy goals. Gillen told participants, “This model is a new best practice for cities.”

Left to right, Denton Mayor Chris Watts, Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler, Philips Lighting Vice President for Professional End User Sales Stacy Gillen, U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, USCM Energy Committee Chair Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis, New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell, and Monrovia Mayor Mary Ann Lutz.
HUD Secretary Castro, Wells Fargo, EDA Fill Community Development and Housing Committee Agenda

By Eugene T. Lowe

HUD Secretary Julián Castro, Wells Fargo Executive Vice President Mary Coffin, and Economic Development Administrator Jay Williams met with the Community Development and Housing Committee chaired by Newton Mayor Setti Warren during the 83rd Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Castro, the former mayor of San Antonio, told the committee, “We are living in a century of cities where urbanization is happening at a fast pace.” This is happening, said the Secretary, because people are looking for the “opportunity for a better life for themselves and their families.” He challenged the mayors, saying, “And as leaders of these urban places you have a tremendous opportunity yourselves to make an impact on those folks lives.”

At HUD, the Secretary said, “We call ourselves the ‘department of opportunity’ because of the role that HUD has played in ensuring that folks find a decent, safe, place to live in America’s urban communities, smaller communities and tribal communities.” This year of 2015, Castro announced, will mark 50 years since the founding of HUD. And at the top of the department’s agenda is insuring rental housing affordability. People across the nation cannot find affordable rental housing. He said the bread and butter programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the HOME program are both very important in achieving rental affordability. Castro said, “CDBG and HOME make rental affordability possible.” But he added that in recent years these “resources have become thinner and thinner.”

The Secretary urged the mayors to be innovative in their efforts to make rental affordability possible. He said that the federal government “can’t address this alone.” Secretary Castro cited cities like Austin that have used bonds specifically for the financing of affordable housing, and other innovative approaches like the employer assisted housing efforts in Philadelphia and the expedited permitting process in San Diego.

Castro encouraged the mayors to sign the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness by 2015, which is the Administration’s targeted date for achieving this goal. He pointed to Phoenix, Salt Lake City and New Orleans as cities that have already effectively ended veterans homelessness.

The Secretary said, “We want to create the opportunity for homeownership.” He explained the “challenge is that in 2015 it is too hard for folks that are working hard and responsible and have decent credit to get a home loan. To address this problem, President Obama recently reduced the FHA mortgage insurance premiums. This move, Castro said, is estimated “to save about 2 million borrowers over the next three years about $900 on average per year and will make it possible for about a quarter of a million new borrowers to get a loan through FHA over the next three years.”

In building up stronger communities, Castro said that “we are focused intensely on place based work.” This includes the choice neighborhood effort and most recently Promise Zones. He said that later in the spring, HUD will announce the next round of Promise Zones and Choice Implementation Grants.

Finally, the Secretary talked about how HUD is building up broadband capacity in the public and subsidized housing communities. Most public and subsidized housing don’t have access to the internet and HUD is addressing the issue.

Head of Wells Fargo Home Lending Consumer Excellence Executive Vice President Mary Coffin briefed the committee on Wells Fargo’s three-year and $3 million CommunityWINS grant to the Conference of Mayors for cities and their non-profits. Cities will be awarded grants to support their efforts in neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and job creation. Grant requirements, application details, application forms and application must be submitted by March 16.

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Assistant Secretary of Commerce Jay Williams told the Committee, “Community development and economic development are linked.” Though his agency works closely with HUD and EPA and other federal departments and agencies, “the Economic Development Administration as a bureau of the Department of Commerce is the only federal agency whose mission is solely devoted to facilitating economic development.” EDA creates the conditions that attract the investment that creates jobs.
The Mayors Business Council

Accela, Inc.
Aclara RF Systems
AECOM
Aimco (Apartment Investment and Management Company)
Airlines for America
American Beverage Association
American Chemistry Council
American Gaming Association
American Management Services, Inc.
American Petroleum Institute
American Water
*AT&T
AutoReturn
Bank of America
Best Buy Co., Inc.
Black & Veatch Corporation
CapSpan
Carton Council
CGI Communications
CH2M HILL
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Citi
Colonial Life
Comcast
Dart Container Corporation
Delos Living, LLC
Duke Energy
Duncan Solutions
Enterprise Holdings Inc.
General Electric
General Motors Company
Google, Inc.
Graffiti Resource Council
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HBR
Health Care Service Corporation
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Hudson News
International Council of Shopping Centers
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IPS Group, Inc.
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Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP
Lion
Lyft, Inc.
Mars Incorporated
Mayors Against Illegal Guns
Microsoft Corporation
Morgan Stanley
Motorola Solutions, Inc.
Mueller Water Products, Inc.
MuniServices, LLC
MWRI, Inc.
National Apartment Association
OPEN, LLC
Pacific Gas & Electric Company
Parsons Brinckerhoff
*Parsons Corporation
PayLock IPT LLC
PayNearMe, Inc.
People for Bikes Business Network
Pepco Holdings, Inc. (PHI)
PerkinElmer
Petra Systems
Philips
Portland Cement Association
Power Survey Company
Proterra Inc.
RecycleBank
Red Bull North America
SAP
Scholastic
Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)
Sensus
Service Employees International Union, CTW, CLC (SEIU)
Siemens Corporation
Sinclair Broadcast Group
Smart Cities Council
Sodexo, Inc.
Southwest Airlines
Sprint
Starbucks Coffee Company
Target Corporation
The American Federation for Children
The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company
The Sherwin-Williams Company
The Weather Company
Thomson Reuters
U.S. Cellular
U.S. Green Building Council
Uber Technologies Inc.
United Healthcare
*United Water
USA Funds
*Veolia North America
Verizon Communications
Visa, Inc.
Walgreens Co.
Walmart
*Waste Management, Inc.
Wells Fargo
Charter Members (*)
Platinum Partners (Bold)
New Members (Italicized)
Conference of Mayors, USA Funds Announce Multi-Year Partnership

National Program Focuses on College, Career Readiness

By Kathy Wiggins

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and USA Funds announced during the January 22 education summit a multi-year partnership to promote innovative programs that prepare students for college and careers.

"With the increasing skill demands of the 21st century workplace, mayors are particularly concerned that all students graduate from high school fully prepared for college and careers," said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. "This partnership with USA Funds, focused on college and career readiness, will highlight our ongoing and excellent work to ensure that America's students are provided high quality education and strong, foundational standards in school as well as rigorous career and technical education programs and college completion goals."

USA Funds has awarded the Conference of Mayors a $320,000 grant to support the new National Education Pathways With a Purpose partnership. As part of the initiative, the Conference of Mayors will award competitive grants to mayors to recognize and expand creative initiatives that they have developed in their communities to advance both college and career readiness and college completion. Cities will be recognized for developing strong and enduring collaborations between K-12 and higher education systems and employers to address college preparation and long-term career success.

"This partnership advances USA Funds’ focus on what we call ‘Completion With a Purpose,’ to increase college completion rates and create pathways for students to successful and rewarding careers,” said USA Funds President and CEO William Hansen. "We are promoting ‘Completion With a Purpose’ through partnerships at many levels, including at the local community level, with mayors and other local leaders. We look forward to joining with the Conference of Mayors to highlight best practice models that improve student outcomes and strengthen communities."

Although details of the Education Pathways With a Purpose grant program will be announced at a later date, the four key elements of "Completion With a Purpose" include:

- **Streamlining key education transitions.** Smoothing the path—especially for disadvantaged students—at key junctures in the education process, for example, high school graduation, the transition to college, and transferring from a community college to a four-year college or university.
- **Facilitating smoother pathways from campus to the workplace.** Improving the alignment between the skills graduates take with them from college and the needs of employers, as well as providing better preparation for employment for students throughout the education pathway.
- **Promoting innovative approaches to college and career preparation.** Tapping technology and other innovations to provide quicker, less-costly, more effective paths to completion of high-quality postsecondary education and training programs.
- **Building new frameworks for data-driven decision-making.** Providing parents, policy makers, employers and education providers with better data for making decisions about which college to choose, which higher education or workforce development initiative to fund, which colleges are producing the best-qualified employees.

The cities selected to receive National Education Pathways With a Purpose grants will be announced during the 83rd Annual Conference of Mayors, June 19-22 in San Francisco. The conference will also feature a forum to disseminate best practices in mayor-led education and workforce development initiatives.

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Conference of Mayors Partnership with Starbucks on “Solution City” Effort Is Huge Success

By Elena Temple Webb

Starbucks Coffee Company Chief Community Officer Blair Taylor gave an update on the Solution City effort that was launched at the Annual Meeting in Dallas. Piloted in five cities – Sacramento, Columbus (OH), Phoenix, Orlando and Baltimore – Solution City is an effort to involve city residents in addressing the challenges that persist in their own communities. Taylor shared that mayors in each city have convened several town-hall meetings in Starbucks coffee shops to foster goal-oriented discussions focused on expanding youth opportunities citing, “Nearly seven million Americans, ages 16-24 are neither in school or employed.” Every city has experienced positive outcomes in growing workforce training and job opportunities for its young people, and Taylor hinted that Starbucks is so pleased that it is considering expansion to additional cities in 2015.
By James Kirby

The DollarWise Campaign awarded its 2015 Innovation Grants to the cities of Hialeah (FL) and Lansing (MI) January 23 at The United States Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting. The winners were announced by Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. The grants will assist in the development of these cities’ financial education programs. DollarWise awarded both cities a $15,000 grant.

DollarWise also awarded its annual Summer Youth Campaign (SYC) Grants for financial literacy to the cities of Charlottesville (VA), Missoula (MT), New York City, Palm Bay (FL), and Pittsburgh. The winning cities will use their DollarWise SYC awards to integrate financial education into their local summer youth programs (SYEP). DollarWise awarded each of these cities a grant for $4,000.00.

Joining Johnson was Bank of America Charitable Foundation Senior Vice President Stephen B. Fitzgerald, who applauded the mayors for their work, and for their dedication to financial literacy. As a founding sponsor, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation has provided ongoing support to the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ DollarWise Campaign for over ten years.

“Comprehensive summer programs are key to the development of our nation’s youth,” said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. “And teaching youth how to become financially responsible at an early age is particularly important. I commend these mayors for their commitment to providing effective financial literacy training to youth in their summer programs,” he said.

These awards were made possible in part through the generous support of the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. These cities have unique programs that address financial education needs. Their programs will serve as templates for other cities across the country.

“As a financial institution, we recognize the need to connect individuals, including our nation’s young people, to better money habits through tools such as financial coaching, tips and other resources,” said Bank of America Charitable Foundation President Kerry Sullivan. “Partnering with The U.S. Conference of Mayors – and with mayors across the country – through the DollarWise Campaign is a great example of how together we can help move the dial on this important issue.” The following descriptions highlight each program and explain how the DollarWise grants will be used.

Innovation Grants for Financial Literacy Award Recipients:

Hialeah will provide financial education to its older demographic through the Hialeah Reads! adult literacy program. Hialeah will use DollarWise funds to help residents meet their financial obligations and reach future financial goals. Hialeah will use its public library system to facilitate its programming.

Lansing will use the Innovation Grant to deliver free financial counseling to residents of public housing, in partnership with the Lansing Housing Commission (LHC). Lansing will hire a part-time administrative staff person to serve as a liaison between LHC and the Financial Empowerment Center. This person will work on-site at the housing developments approximately 25 hours per week.

Summer Youth Campaign (SYC) Grant Recipients:

Charlottesville’s Community Attention Youth Internship Program (CAYIP) will use DollarWise funds to help youth open bank accounts. The program will provide prize incentives for saving 20% of their internship stipend. Remaining DollarWise funds will be used to support CAYIP Counselors as they provide transportation, skill building and education on how to accomplish the banking goal.

Missoula’s Parks and Recreation coordinates a program for teenagers working within the parks system as junior camp counselors and junior lifeguards. Participants learn interview and resume skills, leadership development, and financial management skills. Missoula will use the DollarWise funds to develop, staff, and evaluate financial planning education programs to coincide with leadership and job skills training for youth.

New York City’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) will use a DollarWise grant to pilot engaging, interactive teaching methods for providing financial education, including increased use of technology and e-learning. The grant will also be used to expand and develop its current website to include an interactive financial literacy curriculum, budget sheets, as well as information on banks and credit unions.

Palm Bay’s Juniors to Jobs summer program will use the DollarWise grant to expand its training to include tours of Palm Bay’s Community Credit Union and an overview of banking services. Youth will be given $50 to open a savings account or a student checking account. The program will also offer a Virtual Personal Finance simulation training program that will help youth learn key personal financial skills.

Pittsburgh’s Learn and Earn summer employment program will use DollarWise funds to equip youth with

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academic support, work readiness and financial training, workforce development, and skills training for 14 career tracks. Learn and Earn will engage youth workers in paid work activities for six weeks. The Program will use trained, returning students, to act as Peer Financial Advisors to youth employees.

The DollarWise Campaign is dedicated to the idea that all Americans can benefit from increased access to financial education. As individuals become more financially literate, they are better prepared to build stable families, help themselves and their children gain education, and better contribute to their communities. The Bank of America Charitable Foundation has financially supported DollarWise since its creation in 2004.
Houston, Madison, Evanston Recognized for Exceptional Summer Youth Programs

By Kathy Wiggins

The U.S. Conference of Mayors announced Houston, Madison and Evanston as the three winners of the 2014 National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge and recognized them January 22 at the 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington (DC).

“Cities are making enormous strides in partnering with their business and nonprofit communities to create comprehensive summer youth employment opportunities for youth,” said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. “I applaud these mayors for their leadership, and for their strong dedication to summer youth jobs.”

National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge Winners

Houston Mayor Anise Parker was awarded First Place for large-sized cities. Her efforts helped secure partnerships with over 230 private companies, and place over 1,100 youth in 2014—a 160 percent increase from 2013—in Houston’s Summer Jobs Program (SJP). “SJP provides tremendous potential for our youth and city, and its investment in our future promotes engaged, inspired and empowered young professionals,” said Parker. “Participants gained valuable knowledge and insight, moral support, contacts, experience and direction, all essential components in their long-term development.”

Madison Mayor Paul Soglin received First Place for medium-sized cities. Through Soglin’s leadership in securing private and nonprofit sector participation, Madison realized partnerships with 78 employers. “A recent study from the University of Chicago Crime Lab and the University of Pennsylvania showed that a public summer jobs program for high school students from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Chicago reduced violent crime arrests by 43 percent over a 16-month period,” said Soglin. Research also demonstrates that developing career aspirations and drawing connections between education and work positively impacts youths’ likelihood of earning a college degree.

Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl was awarded First Place for small-sized cities. Tisdahl worked with her business and philanthropic communities to secure a 225 percent increase in placements with private sector employers for young people in her city. “One young man asked to have his Summer job extended to be year round,” said Tisdahl. “He had been shot in a gang altercation and wanted to be able to tell his friends he could not hang out with them because he had to be at work. He got the job and now he hangs out with people at Public Works.”

Each year, the Conference of Mayors launches the National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge to urge mayors to create innovative partnerships with their local business and non-profit communities, to ensure that the nation’s youth have a meaningful summer job experience. Cities have the opportunity to provide information about their programs, and three cities—one small, one medium, and one large—are recognized for their success.

National League of Cities President Becker

National League of Cities President Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker brought greetings to the Winter Meeting on February 23 and discussed his theme of “Go Local” on shared priorities such as infrastructure investment and the Marketplace Fairness Act.
Aclara RF Systems Incorporated
American Management Services, Inc.
American Water
AT&T
Black & Veatch Corporation
CGI Communications
CH2M HILL
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Comcast
HDR
Holland & Knight LLP
International Council of Shopping Centers
Itron, Inc.
KHAFA Engineering Consultants
Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP
Lion
Motorola Solutions
MWH, Inc.
Parsons Corporation
Pepco Holdings, Inc. (PHI)
Sodexo, Inc.
Sprint
Starbucks Coffee Company
Target Corporation
The Sherwin-Williams Company
United Water
URS
Veolia North America
Verizon Communications
Walmart
Waste Management, Inc.
To Boost Jobs in Cities Focus Must be on Workforce Development

By Megan Cardiff

Investments in workforce development are critical for cities to ensure that their citizens are well trained and obtain the necessary skills for available jobs, and to enable local businesses to more effectively access the human capital they need. The U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Development Council (WDC) met January 21-22 in conjunction with the Conference of Mayors 83rd Annual Winter Meeting, to discuss implementation of new workforce legislation – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – and successful job-training programs in cities.

Conference of Mayors Jobs, Education and the Workforce Chairman West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and a thank you to council members for their dedication and hard work, saying “The council has grown not only in its membership, but also in its commitment and depth. Thank you for your constant support of mayors in the workforce arena.”

The council was also joined by St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay who talked about his city’s collaboration between the Missouri Department of Workforce Development with Talify Missouri to drive next generation talent matching. Slay thanked WDC members saying, “The workforce system is critical to cities’ efforts to get people back to work and in helping advance individual’s careers, and I know you don’t always get the credit and recognition you deserve, but mayors understand and appreciate all that you do for our cities.”

Kiosite Founder and CEO Michael Novack gave a more in-depth description of the Talify program. Talify, a website where people can search and apply for jobs using a behavioral traits assessment, helps employers better find the most ideal candidate for a position by identifying several character traits, their level of education and their experience.

Senior Policy Advisor at the White House National Economic Council Paige Shervin provided an update on federal job-training reforms and new Administration initiatives. She discussed the President’s new proposal to make two years of community college free for responsible students and the Administration’s work to expand apprenticeships. Paige was joined by her colleague Ryan Burke, Policy Advisor at the White House National Economic Council, who discussed the Administration’s efforts to partner with industry to expand job opportunities in information technology, in the upcoming months, the Administration will bring together leaders in technology, business, workforce and education who are committed to support community efforts in transitioning individuals into well-paying, in-demand tech jobs.

The council was honored to hear from Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Commissioner Erica Groshen, who emphasized the necessity for workforce boards to work more closely with the bureau. BLS’s main data goals to better serving localities will be achieved through accuracy, relevance, objectiveness, timeliness and accessibility. She also pointed out that the bureau currently does not have immediate access to state unemployment insurance wage records, and gaining this would be a tremendous help in providing workforce organizations with more timely and accurate data.

Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration Deputy Assistant Secretary Gerri Fiala joined the WDC for an update on WIOA implementation and other department priorities. “WIOA gives us the opportunity to step back and think about how we can collaborate to make a more successful workforce system. It is an extraordinary time for the public workforce system to improve and link diverse talent to our nation’s business needs,” said Fiala. Implementation is set for July 2013 and she assured members guidance on the legislation’s vision and actions toward implementation, as well as youth programming, will be released in the coming months to help local boards transition.

Treehouse Island, Inc. CEO Ryan Carson also discussed his company’s partnerships with Portland and Louisville to expand coding training programs in each city. Code Louisville and Code Oregon both use Treehouse, an online learning platform, to help people without experience in coding land jobs without a degree. “Treehouse’s partnership with local government has been the key to the program’s success,” said Ryan.

Q&A: Benefits Talk

Answers to Your Employee Benefit Questions

By Colonial Life Vice President Carey Adamson

Throughout 2015, Carey Adamson, Vice President of public sector market services for Colonial Life, will answer our questions about employee benefits and how you can position your program for success.

U.S. Mayor: How much time in advance of an enrollment do employees need to review their benefits options?

Adamson: In short, probably more time than you are giving them.

In a recent research report we produced on effective enrollments, employees’ opinions of their benefits package improve when they have sufficient time to understand their options. When employees are given less than two weeks, we found that only seven percent of employees rate their benefits education highly and only eight percent rate their overall benefits highly. Those numbers soar, however, with more time.

When employees are given three or more weeks to review their benefit options, 57 percent have favorable opinions of their education and 53 percent have favorable opinions of their benefits.

Unfortunately, many employers have been reducing the amount of time employees are given to review their benefit options. According to our research, only 47 percent of employers gave their employees more than three weeks review time.

When planning your next enrollment period, allow yourself the necessary time to adequately communicate your benefits plan to your employees. This will allow your employees to have a better understanding of their options – and a better appreciation of the overall benefits package available to them. Download our white paper, “Building a Better Benefits Enrollment,” at http://www.coloniallife.com/newsroom/whitepapers.aspx.

About Colonial Life

Colonial Life is a market leader in providing financial protection benefits through the workplace, including disability, life, accident, cancer, critical illness and hospital confinement indemnity insurance. The company’s benefit services and education, innovative enrollment technology and personal service support more than 80,000 businesses and organizations, representing more than three million of America’s workers and their families. For more information about Colonial Life’s products and services, contact Carey Adamson at CAdamson@ColonialLife.com or visit www.ColonialLife.com.

Arts Are Our Soul

“The arts are our soul” was a mantra heard often during the plenary arts breakfast featuring the national arts awards for leadership in the arts. Moderated by New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, Chair of the Conference of Mayors Standing Committee on Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment and Sports, the breakfast included the arts awards to mayors, an address by National Endowment for the Arts Chair Jane Chu, and a performance by internationally acclaimed opera singer Carla Dirlikov.

“I challenge you to go through the rest of the day without listening to any music, looking at anything that is beautiful or reading anything that edifies your soul and see how you did and ask yourself whether you liked it and are we better as a people without culture, art, music and beauty. I bet you can’t do it,” stated Landrieu.

Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran kicked the session off by suggesting that it was time for a White House Summit on the Arts. “It’s time to get a little buzz going,” stated Cochran, who had some preliminary discussions with arts organizations about such a summit.

Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert Lynch, co-sponsor with the Conference of Mayors of the National Arts Leadership Awards, talked about the importance of the mayors to the arts world. “You [the mayors] are our best partners,” stated Lynch.

Chu, in her maiden address to the nation’s mayors, stressed the need to celebrate the distinctiveness of our cities. “The arts help us see what is exceptional about where we live” stated Chu. She cited examples in such cities as Minneapolis, Boston, Little Rock and New Orleans as places where the arts are fostering connections between creativity and innovation. “We must continue to work together to find new ways for the arts to help our communities thrive. And [we] will help our communities shine to their full potential.”

Three civic leaders who have supported and promoted arts and culture in their communities were honored.

2015 National Award for State Arts Leadership: Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper

After serving eight years as mayor of Denver, Hickenlooper continues to build on his commitment to promoting the arts, now on the state level as he begins his second term as the Governor of Colorado. Since he took state office, Hickenlooper has doubled the state’s annual appropriations for the arts and culture.

Under his leadership as governor, he has signed three bills advancing creative place making efforts in Colorado including a creative district program in 2011 and a creative district community loan fund in 2014. Since the inception of this effort, Colorado has selected 20 communities into its creative district program through a highly competitive process. Twelve communities have been certified as creative districts by the state and receive state funding to accelerate their development along with private foundation and business support. This is a strategic community and economic development program.

Colorado’s state arts agency, Colorado Creative Industries, is the first state arts agency in the country to invest in real estate development in creative districts because of legislation advanced during the governor’s time in office. The governor is also advancing a strategy for affordable artist live/work space in a number of urban and rural communities to encourage artists to settle in their communities. Hickenlooper has doubled the state’s annual appropriations for the arts and culture. He has also doubled the state’s annual appropriations for the arts and culture.

2015 National Award for Local Arts Leadership for Cities with a population fewer than 100,000: Nashua (NH) Mayor Donnalee Lozeau

A third generation citizen born and raised in Nashua, Lozeau was elected in 2007 as the city’s 55th, and first woman mayor. Beginning her first term in January 2008, Lozeau provided city resources in support of creating one of the most innovative arts organizations whose mission was to provide permanent public art for the city. Starting in 2008, Nashua became the only city in the United States to host an annual international sculpture symposium, the Nashua International Sculpture Symposium (NISS), with artists from around the world participating.

To generate design ideas for a major roadway and bridge construction project in the city, Lozeau hosted the first ever Nashua International Design Competition. The competition generated architectural ideas for Nashua’s Broad Street Parkway. The Broad Street Parkway project is supported by city and federal funding at a cost of approxim-
If Mayors Ruled the World Author Promotes Global Parliament of Mayors

By Paul Leroux

Visiting the Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, Dr. Benjamin R. Barber, an acclaimed political theorist, spoke to mayors about plans for a Global Parliament of Mayors. Barber, who authored the 2013 book If Mayors Ruled the World, addressed the plenary luncheon January 22, where he detailed the theory and practice of this new global governance institution.

“The nation state is no longer able to solve the problems of an interdependent, globalizing world,” said Barber, arguing that cities are now better equipped to handle transnational challenges such as global warming, illegal immigration, global pandemics, and questions of financial capital.

However, Barber stressed that cities cannot, and should not, act to solve these challenges by themselves or in a vacuum. “Cities have to work together,” he stressed, “They are far more capable of global cooperation than any other political entity.”

To create a venue for cooperation, Barber is working with mayors around the world, and with organizations like The U.S. Conference of Mayors, to develop a new Global Parliament of Mayors. The Global Parliament of Mayors offers a venue for mayors to collaborate on solutions to shared problems and share new opportunities with each other.

Echoing the often-cited metro economies statistics of U.S. metro areas, Barber argued that global cities are entitled to organize and demand change because they account for more than half of the world’s population, 82 percent of global GDP, and 90 percent of all patents issued worldwide. “It is time that our cities do the work they do not with unfunded mandates, but with the resources they generate,” he said.

While Barber’s presentation developed much of the theory and rationale for the Global Parliament of Mayors, he stressed that, “In the last 18 months, [it] has become a working operation,” with plans for regular meetings of mayors. Barber stated that mayors will only have to meet physically in this Global Parliament about once a year, and that more frequent virtual meetings will become a hallmark of the process.

On October 23 and 24 in London and Bristol, UK, the Global Parliament of Mayors will meet for the first time, with over 120 mayors in attendance. Barber encouraged any mayor interested in participating to come to England in October, and is working with the U.S. Conference of Mayors to secure strong U.S. participation.

Dr. Benjamin Barber speaks to a plenary session about the Global Parliament of Mayors, which will hold its inaugural sessions on October 23 and 24 in London and Bristol, UK.

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED OPERA SINGER CARLA DIRLIKOV ACCOMPANIED BY JUSTIN SNYDER ON PIANO PERFORMED A SELECTION FROM CARMEN.
Conference of Mayors, ScottsMiracle-Gro Announce GRO1000 Grant Winners at 83rd Winter Meeting

During the 83rd Winter Meeting, the Conference of Mayors and The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company announced the winners of the 2015 GRO1000 Garden and Green Spaces Grant Program, a key component of ScottsMiracle-Gro’s commitment to support the creation of more than 1,000 community gardens and green spaces in the United States, Canada and Europe by 2018. This year’s winning cities were chosen by a panel of former mayors and national garden experts. GRO1000 grant winners receive a total of $40,000 in monetary support and in-kind donations to develop gardens and green spaces that will help transform their communities.

The 2015 GRO1000 Showcase Grant Winners

Dallas – Mayor Michael S. Rawlings, La Bajada Urban Youth Farm. This previously vacant 4.5-acre lot will be transformed into an education and recreation zone for area residents. This public green space will also address by providing a healthy food source for a community that is a food desert. The completed urban space will have a little league baseball field, office space and a commercial kitchen for ongoing educational opportunities.

Hartford – Mayor Pedro E. Segarra, Hartford Grown Project. This project is an extension of KNOX, the City of Hartford’s community garden and horticulture program that supports many urban gardening efforts. The GRO1000 grant will fund a beautification project across 30 city blocks, including an organized cleanup project, tree plantings, and construction of raised floral beds and community gardens along the city’s “Avenue” district.

Rochester – Mayor Lovely A. Warren, Rochester Urban Agriculture Garden and Training Center. With the help of GRO1000, the Rochester Urban Agriculture Garden & Training Center will be constructed at the site of the old Silver Stadium to address inadequate nutrition and access to healthy foods in the area. The community garden will increase access to fresh produce, serve as a meeting place and provide technical assistance and education for all community members.

West Sacramento – Mayor Christopher L. Cabaldon, 5th & C Street Urban Farm. The 5th & C Street Urban Farm will use the GRO1000 funds to expand its gardens and green space, which currently sells over 50 varieties of sustainably grown fruits, vegetables and herbs. The expansion includes educational programs for area residents and businesses, a point of sale for produce grown by local non-profit organizations and community gardens.

“We are proud to continue our partnership with The U.S. Conference of Mayors as we work together to improve our nation’s cities through green space development,” said Jim Hagedorn, ScottsMiracle-Gro Chairman and CEO in a statement announcing the grants. “Through GRO1000, we hope more people will be able to turn their piece of the Earth into what they imagine.”

For more information on the GRO1000 Gardens and Green Spaces Grants Program, visit the website www.usmayors.org/GRO1000.

Dean of Mayors Remembers “Urban Mechanic:” A Tribute to Tom Menino

The mayors took a moment during the Winter Meeting to pay tribute to former Conference of Mayors President Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino who died last October at the age of 71 after a long battle with cancer. “Tom ‘Tommy’ Menino was for us mayors an exceptional teacher,” said past Conference of Mayors President Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. in remarks he personally wrote for the occasion. “He gave no lessons – we just watched and listened, and came to understand his heart, grew to admire him greatly, and wanted to try to be more like him.”

Menino served as mayor of Boston for five terms, from 1993 to 2014 – longer than any other mayor in that city’s history – and was President of The United States Conference of Mayors from 2002-03. In his remarks, Riley noted Menino’s beloved status in his hometown, where his laserlike focus on “nuts and bolts” quality-of-life issues for his residents earned Menino the nickname “urban mechanic.” As Riley spoke, a photo montage depicting highlights from Menino’s tenure as mayor and Conference of Mayors President played on a large screen in the background, reinforcing in a sense Menino’s larger-than-life reputation as a model mayor.

It seemed especially fitting that Menino’s tribute would be delivered by Riley, himself affectionately known as the “Dean of Mayors.” Riley first took office as mayor of Charleston in 1975 and is currently beginning his fortieth year in office.

“He so well served the people he respected and loved that he led them to unprecedented heights,” said Riley. “…And he gave us a model of what a great mayor is.”

Riley’s full remarks can be viewed online at http://new.livestream.com/mayors/83rdWinterMeeting. Click on the video entitled “Childhood Obesity Prevention Luncheon” – Riley’s remarks begin at approximately the 1:37:45 mark.
San Francisco Mayor Lee “Rolling Out Red Carpet” for the 83rd Annual Conference

San Francisco • June 19-22

Registration will open March 2015
Details will be available at USMAYORS.ORG

“Thank you for being mayors,” San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee told his colleagues on January 22 as he said how pleased he is to be hosting the next USCM Annual Conference in June. Lee encouraged all the mayors to bring their families to this meeting.