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Left to right, USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, and NUL President and CEO Marc Morial.



Left to right, Columbus (OH) Mayor Michael Coleman, Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton, Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Moderator Jeff Johnson, Columbia (SC) Mayor Stephen Benjamin, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, and Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson participate in One Nation Underemployed panel discussion at NUL 2014 Conference.

Congress Works to Stave Off Insolvency of Federal Transportation Trust Fund

By Kevin McCarty

Before adjourning for the August recess, Congressional leaders are working to develop final legislation to send to the President addressing the anticipated insolvency of the federal Transportation Trust Fund.

The House of Representatives, led by Ways and Means Committee Chair Dave Camp (MI), voted July 15 on what is being called "trust fund patch legislation," approving the measure on a 367-55 vote.

Included in the House-passed bill are revenue-raising provisions totaling about \$11 billion, funds sufficient to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund and keep the nation's current surface transportation law (MAP-21) funded through May 31, 2015.

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Berger Urges EPA Regional Offices to Support Integrated Planning

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Lima (OH) Mayor David J. Berger testifies before a congressional subcommittee on EPA's Integrated Planning and the cost of complying with unfunded mandates.

Photo by Judy Sheahan, USCM



**July 25, 2014
Washington (DC)**

After a great meeting in Dallas, we have a number of activities and events that many mayors will attend.

This week, President Kevin Johnson and a number of mayors were with me at The National Urban League's Annual Meeting in Cincinnati. With President and CEO Marc Morial's leadership, The National Urban League and The U.S. Conference of Mayors continue to strengthen the strong relationship that continues between the two organizations that were born, exist and work hard toward common goals.

Our leadership, led by President Kevin Johnson, will travel to New York City on August 10-11, for our first meeting of the Cities of Opportunity Task Force. New York Mayor City Bill de Blasio was appointed by President Johnson in Dallas to lead the new task force. Mayor Johnson named Boston Mayor Martin Walsh to serve as his Vice Chair of the new task force.

The work of the task force is to come forth with initiatives and partnerships that will help mayors and cities strengthen their efforts to close the widening wealth gap that we find in our nation today.

In New York City, mayors will focus on five issues and develop a set of actions mayors can implement with our partners at the state and federal governmental levels and with the business community. The actions recommended in New York will be included for reporting at our Leadership Meeting in Sacramento September 27 to 29, and at our Winter Meeting here in Washington DC January 21 to 23.

August 28-29 will find the Conference of Mayors raising its flag in Louisville where our Food Policy Task Force, hosted by Louisville Mayor Greg Fisher, and chaired by Madison Mayor Paul Soglin will meet.

The food policy issue is about good

food and, even more in today's world of cities, the economic benefits of growing and supporting healthy food systems. This is an emerging priority for mayors and cities in every region of the nation. The Conference of Mayors Food Policy Task Force continues to emphasize the impact of new jobs, access to good food for all neighborhoods and decreasing health challenges such as diabetes, obesity, and other related diseases.

We encourage you to go to Louisville to learn from Mayors Soglin and Fischer and their teams as well as the other mayors who will be bringing their food policy best practices to the meeting. Contact Crystal Swann at cswann@usmayors.org or 202-861-6707 for more details on the events and schedule of this important meeting.

Our 2014 Fall Leadership Meeting will be in Sacramento, September 27-29. Conference President Johnson will host and chair this meeting as we continue to emphasize our Cities 3.0 Initiative. Many promising opportunities were presented in Dallas and there is much work to be done.

We are also looking forward to the first-ever United States Conference of Mayors meetings at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock.

First, on October 8-9, the USCM Community Policing Meeting is an opportunity for Mayors and Police Chiefs to come together to discuss best practices and the very latest technological advances in today's police departments. Mayor Mark Stodola informed us that this meeting is on President Clinton's schedule. No doubt, working with the Clinton White House, we reduced high spikes of crime and violence during his Presidency. The COPS program was key to the crime and violence reduction. Fighting crime and providing public safety for our cities remains a top priority. For info on the Community Policing Meeting contact Laura Waxman at lwaxman@usmayors.org or 202-861-6754.

Also in Little Rock, on Friday October 10, we will segue into the USCM Ports/Exports and Imports Meeting focusing on ocean and river ports. At issue is the

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Conference of Mayors President Johnson Addresses National Urban League

"Education is the Civil Rights Issue of Our Time"

By Elena Temple Webb

Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson addressed the National Urban League (NUL) during the organization's annual conference in Cincinnati. Johnson joined Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, NUL Affiliate Board Chairs, Urban League Guild Members, and NUL Young Professionals Chapter Presidents at the Joint Leadership Luncheon on July 23.

Johnson's remarks to the group focused on education as "the civil rights issue of our time," and he urged NUL to take the lead. "Our nation's public education system is in a crisis, and it's especially bad for our community."

He continued, "Two months ago, our nation marked the 60th Anniversary of the famous Brown vs. Board decision. In those six decades, America has ended segregation, abolished Jim Crow and elected an African-American president. But the struggle for true education equality persists."

Johnson cited daunting national statistics that show four out of five African

American students aren't reading proficiently in 4th grade and only fifty-two percent of African American males graduate from high school. He applauded NUL for its work to improve education outcomes for young people, but explained, "We can't wait on Washington."

Johnson then urged NUL to work with mayors in cities across the country to get things done. "Mayors don't have time to deal with the partisan bickering that goes back and forth between Democrats and Republicans. We're pragmatic, practical and problem-solvers and we are with you in the trenches. We are your allies in the movement."



Mayors Host Panel Discussion at National Urban League: One Nation Underemployed

Mayors from across the country participated in a panel discussion at the NUL opening session titled "One Nation Underemployed." Journalist, social activist and political commentator Jeff Johnson moderated the session featuring Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson, Jack-



USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson addresses NUL leadership: "The struggle for true education equality persists."

sonville Mayor Alvin Brown, Columbus (OH) Mayor Michael Coleman, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, Columbia (SC) Mayor Stephen Benjamin, Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, and Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton. The discussion covered a broad array of topics ranging from economic disparities to education, transportation, healthcare, the technology innovation, small business development, and increasing opportunities for women and African American youth. Johnson also encouraged questions from the audience, prompting an energetic back-and-forth between NUL attendees and the panelists that proved to be one of the most memorable sessions of the meeting. Video of the NUL conference can be found online at www.nul.org.

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investment of sound ports infrastructure allowing port cities to compete with the ports of other nations. The ports discussion also involves the question of how to

export and import our goods and services. Mayors will be offered solutions for the challenges they face when they work with their business communities to export or import goods. For more information on the Ports/Exports and Imports Meeting contact Dave Gatton at dgatton@usmayors.org or 202-861-6712.

We welcome the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Mayor Johnson and our leadership will bring focus and a clear path of action as we continue our mission of making our cities better for our people and our nation.

Join the 2014 Summer Youth Jobs Contest

By James Kirby

The DollarWise Campaign is currently in the fifth week of its Summer Youth Jobs Contest, where youth in summer jobs have the chance to win iPads, Kindles, and iPods for completing five online financial education modules.

So far, youth from Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Columbus, Corpus Christi, Los Angeles, Miami, Sacramento, St. Louis, Tacoma, Washington (DC) and Wichita have all won prizes.

There are still two more opportunities for youth to win. Youth should send

in short videos August 1 discussing their summer job experiences and how they saved the money that they earned to meet summer savings goals. The best three videos will win prizes. DollarWise will hold a final raffle August 7 for youth who completed all five modules.

Each year, the DollarWise Campaign invites cities and their summer youth jobs programs to participate in its Summer Youth Jobs Contest. The contest modules provide important information that help youth to save for their future. For 2014, DollarWise has partnered with Better Money Habits.com to provide the con-

test curriculum. The five modules include information on: general better money habits, how to set a budget, credit and debit cards, how interest works, and easy ways to save money. The modules can be found through a link on the DollarWise homepage: www.beddollarwise.org.

The DollarWise Campaign and the Summer Youth Jobs Contest are made possible by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

For more information, visit the DollarWise [website](http://www.beddollarwise.org), or contact DollarWise Program Manager James Kirby at jkirby@usmayors.org.

Mayors Active at CGI America



A number of mayors from across the country were active participants in the Clinton Global Initiative meeting in Denver June 23-25. Host Mayor Michael B. Hancock and a number of other mayors participated in two-days of sessions on Infrastructure for Cities and States, as well as discussions on human investment. Left to right, Wilma J. Webb, Former Denver Mayor Wellington E. Webb, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, Former President Bill Clinton, Lisa Nutter, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Kansas City (MO) Mayor Sly James, and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

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Deciding When to Outsource Energy Services

"Outsourcing" traces its modern roots to the global expansion of business in the 1970s and 80s. During this time frame, the mindset was that, in order to compete, organizations must focus on their core business, and then identify other critical services that could be accomplished by contracting outside the organization. An organization typically would "outsource" if it did not have the necessary internal competency. These outsourced services were those necessary to run the organization, often highly specialized, but not related specifically to the core business.

While this movement picked up steam in the private sector, the public sector soon embraced the strategy. When it comes to procurement by federal agencies, the General Services Administration (GSA) is a perfect example. A particular federal agency will utilize its own staff and expertise to deliver the goods and services required by the agency, while outsourcing the procurement function for various products and services to the GSA. While the concept is straightforward and time-tested, many entities have shied away from outsourcing because they felt it threatened their role, added cost and time, or in some cases, because their governing body felt it should be done internally. Here we will investigate when it makes sense for an organization to outsource the management and procurement of energy for its facilities, and how to discuss the decision within the organization.

Lack of Personnel. When you don't have the staff available to devote the necessary time, outsourcing makes sense. This is such a common theme with governmental entities that it is almost overlooked today. In most departments, when an organization looks at the list of what needs to be done, the next thought is that several more people need to be hired. The reality, though, is that the funds needed to hire those people never seem to materialize. Therefore, the old mantra arises, "You must do more with

less." When it comes to managing and procuring energy, if the staff is not available to devote the necessary time, then organizations many times just stay with the local utility or rely on their current supplier to continue providing service. Any option that does not involve a full competitive procurement process ultimately leads to a less desirable price and a higher utility budget.

Lack of Resources. When the job you need to do requires a certain set of tools/resources you don't have, outsourcing makes sense. In situations when a purchasing department has the personnel available to conduct a fully competitive procurement for energy services, the issue then becomes whether the resources are present to lead to maximum success. In terms of energy procurement, the most essential resource is daily, direct access to the wholesale energy markets. More than any other factor, it is the wholesale price of energy that directly affects the retail price the end user will pay. Therefore, the very best thing that an organization can do to increase the likelihood of contracting at a favorable time, is to actively monitor the wholesale market on an ongoing basis to fully understand the current market and the factors that may cause prices to rise or fall today, tomorrow, or next week. If your organization does not have this ability, outsourcing to a firm that is involved directly in the wholesale energy market is by far the best way to obtain this resource competency.

Lack of Expertise. When your current staff doesn't have the experience or expertise to successfully complete the job, outsourcing makes sense. So what about the situation where an organization feels it has the staff and the resources necessary to procure energy? One might then ask if the staff actually has the expertise necessary to bring these pieces together successfully. The right tool, in the hands of someone who doesn't know best how to use it, is many times as ineffective as using no tool at all. The best resolution

always comes when the person coordinating the procurement is an expert in the field of energy, with a thorough understanding of both the wholesale and retail markets and many years of experience advising users.

The bottom line is that, in order to ensure an organization procures the right price, at the right time, under the best contract terms, you must make sure you have dedicated staff with a high level of expertise in the energy sector, along with the resources necessary to access, understand, and interpret movement in the wholesale market. Only if you have all of these pieces in place should you attempt to procure energy services internally. For those organizations that do not, outsourcing the management and procurement of energy not only makes sense, but is the responsible thing to do in order to best control and manage an organization's utility budget. It's all about "return-on-investment" – any added cost of outsourcing is superseded by the overall lower cost of energy. When all the pieces are utilized properly, and the procurement department is able to continue to demonstrate its value by saving dollars that could be better utilized in other areas, everyone will agree it's IN to OUTsource energy.

Written by Bob Wooten for *Government Procurement* magazine <http://view-er.zmags.com/publication/25d710e2#/25d710e2/12>

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Revere Mayor Rizzo Receives USCM-Google Get Your Business Online City Challenge Award

By David W. Burns

The United States Conference of Mayors and Google presented Revere and its mayor, Dan Rizzo, with the small city award for the Get Your Business Online City Challenge in a local award ceremony on July 16 at Revere City Hall.

The presentation, attended by local small business owners, students, and others, provided an opportunity to showcase



Revere Mayor Dan Rizzo, third left, gathered with students and community leaders, along with representatives from Google and USCM on July 16 to celebrate Revere's award for the Get Your Business Online City Challenge.

the hard work and effort by the many individuals and partners involved in creating the Revere Get Your Business Online program. Revere's efforts were built largely around its "Tech Buddies" program where participating high school students provided help to small businesses who needed assistance creating their website. Students went door-to-door to visit businesses and demonstrate the power of an online presence. The city also hosted a total of 14

training sessions for small businesses to teach them how to get online.

For its efforts, Revere receives a technology prize package valued at \$50,000, which includes phones, tablets, and laptops. Revere plans to give Chromebooks away to small businesses that complete its program to build a web site.

The other winning cities of the Challenge include Garland and Louisville.

Meeting Alert: USCM Food Policy Task Force Meeting "How Creating Healthier Cities Can Boost a City's Local Food Economy"

August 28-29 • 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville

Mayors are often called upon to help improve access to healthy foods for children and other city residents, but at the upcoming meeting of the Conference of Mayors Food Policy Task Force August 28 and 29 in Louisville, mayors will also discuss how to build and finance local food systems that function as job creators and economic drivers. Hosted by Louisville Mayor Greg

Fischer and led by Task Force Chair Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, the meeting will make the connection between creating healthier communities while reducing childhood obesity and growing a healthy local food economic.

The meeting is open to both mayors and mayoral staff. Mayors are encouraged to bring their lead food policy advisers with them to the ses-

sion. Online registration is available at <http://www.usmayors.org/foodpolicy>. For more information on the Louisville meeting, or about the work of the Food Policy Task Force in general, contact Assistant Executive Director Crystal Swann by telephone at (202) 861-6707 or by e-mail at cswann@usmayors.org.

Providence Mayor Taveras Accepts Outstanding Achievement City Livability Award for PopUp Providence



Photo by Meaghan McCabe

USCM and Waste Management presented Providence Mayor Angel Taveras on July 18 with an Outstanding Achievement Award for its PopUp Providence project, an urban space initiative to enliven neighborhoods and engage residents with interactive artistic and cultural projects. Taveras received his award at the launch of The Providence Polaroid Project, the latest installation, which is a temporary Polaroid camera shop, instant film gallery, and participatory portrait studio in Downcity Providence. Left to right, USCM City Livability Awards Director Jocelyn Bogen, Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, Waste Management Senior District Manager Chris Collins, and Waste Management Director of Long-Range Planning Providence Planning and Development Bonnie Nickerson.

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MAYORS BUSINESS COUNCIL

Member Profile

THE AMERICAN GAMING ASSOCIATION

The American Gaming Association (AGA) is the national trade association representing the interests of the \$37.34 billion commercial casino and gaming manufacturing companies that directly support more than 336,000 American jobs, which produce \$13.2 billion in wages, and generate \$8.60 billion in tax revenue. AGA serves its members by facilitating the growth of the gaming industry.

As part of that effort, we recently launched a multiyear public affairs campaign to promote the value of gaming called, "Get to Know Gaming." This campaign's research and cutting-edge communication techniques serve to pave the way for more communities to understand that gaming companies are partners for a successful economic development strategy, and adopt policies that reflect that mindset.

The AGA also showcases gaming's premiere trade show and conference, Global Gaming Expo (G2E) that connects, informs and empowers the industry.

Stay up to date with the AGA's newest research, stats and facts about gaming's economic impact on local communities by visiting www.GettoKnowGaming.org.

Special Interests: Community Development, Economic Development, Employment & Training, Tax Legislation, Tourism Development

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Stresses Need for Regional Cooperation, Legislative Fix

By Judy Sheahan

Lima Mayor David J. Berger testified on behalf of the Conference of Mayors at a July 24 hearing before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water. The hearing was entitled *Integrated Planning and Permitting Framework: An Opportunity for EPA to Provide Communities with Flexibility to Make Smart Investments in Water Quality*, and was chaired by Representative Bob Gibbs (OH) along with Ranking Member Tim Bishop (NY).

The purpose of the hearing was to examine how the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Integrated Planning Framework was working and to discuss proposed legislation that would provide relief for communities that are trying to comply with wastewater mandates. In addition to Berger's testimony, Mayors Don Plusquellic of Akron, Mary Ann Lutz of Monrovia, and Lloyd Winnecke of Evansville all submitted letters and supporting material regarding the situation their communities face, including the costs of water and wastewater mandate compliance.

Gibbs opened the hearing by saying, "In our previous hearings, we heard about how communities all across the Nation are facing increasing regulatory, enforcement, and financial pressures... A large portion of these regulatory mandates are going unfunded by the federal and state governments, with the result that many municipalities have had to make

Berger Testifies on EPA's Integrated Planning, Unfunded Mandates



Lima Mayor David J. Berger, left, and Representative Grace Napolitano (CA) discuss the impact that unfunded mandates have on low- and middle-income citizens.

substantial increases in investments in wastewater and public water infrastructure in recent years. Local communities and ratepayers are now increasingly tapped out economically. In response to some of these issues, EPA developed an integrated planning and permitting policy in 2012 that was intended to provide some flexibility in how communities manage their regulatory and enforcement mandates under the Clean Water Act. The policy outlines how communities can prioritize multiple Clean Water Act obligations and develop plans for addressing those obligations in a flexible manner, to reduce their cost burdens."

Berger had high praise for EPA Headquarters saying they should be "commended for their high level and sustained involvement in this Integrated Planning Dialogue," which resulted in the issuance of a Green Infrastructure (GI) Memorandum, an Integrated Planning Memorandum, and an anticipated third product, a

Financial Capability Assessment process.

However, he explained, the cooperation shown by EPA Headquarters has not yet been demonstrated in EPA's Regional offices. "Unfortunately, local governments trying to address water issues with the Regional Offices have not been afforded the flexibility discussed with EPA Headquarters. While EPA has told us that over a dozen local governments are working on integrated plans, no integrated plan has been approved and one has been disapproved," Berger said.

Evansville's \$540 million dollar proposed Integrated Plan was recently rejected by Region 5. According to Winnecke, the Region is "...demanding that my city build additional controls that are not supported by the Clean Water Act...and will result in costs that are more than my citizens can afford."

The issue of compliance costs and

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affordability were a common theme. Lutz wrote, "It has become readily apparent that the cost for water and wastewater mandates has grown to an alarming rate and it is disproportionately impacting our poorest and most vulnerable citizens."

Plusquellic said, "We hope EPA will carry through on the promises made by EPA Headquarters officials to The U.S. Conference of Mayors. If they do not, then the lower and middle income citizens of Akron will suffer a devastating [financial] impact."

Representative Grace Napolitano

(CA) added, "As members of Congress we need to seriously look into this issue and try to find some common sense solutions that still protect public health and the environment but to do it in a way that doesn't unnecessarily burden our low and middle income residents."

In his own city of Lima, Berger has been trying for two years to get approval for their Integrated Plan. "While headquarters prioritizes Integrated Planning, the Regional Offices actively resist proposals that require flexibility, longer timetables, and priority setting, and focus instead on high cost approaches, fixed deadlines, and penalties," Berger said. "While cities applaud the continuing engagement and good faith efforts of EPA headquarters, we must report that the message is not getting through to the Regional Offices."

"We need Congress to provide relief," Berger said. "We need Congress to provide oversight and to remember that EPA has its authority because of the way the Clean Water Act was written and enacted by the Congress."

Berger outlined the Conference of Mayors' proposed legislation, The Water Quality Improvement Act, which would "fill the gap between EPA assurances and EPA action." The proposed bill, which is still a discussion draft, asks Congress to either provide money in the form of grants and loans, or to provide regulatory flexibility to allow cities to achieve their water goals in an environmentally feasible and affordable way. The discussion draft would codify the Integrated Planning Framework as well as include provisions on such issues as Affordability Criteria, Permit Compliance, Attainable Water Quality Standards, as well as eliminating penalties for communities who have adopted a compliance plan. For a copy of the discussion draft or a side-by-side comparison of the other proposed legislation, e-mail jsheahan@usmayors.org.

Senator Gillibrand Introduces Summer Meals Act of 2014

By Crystal Swann

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) introduced the Summer Meals Act of 2014, S. 2527, which would enable more children across the country to receive free summer meals and make administration of the meals easier for community sponsors. Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK) is co-sponsoring the bill, which is supported by more than 40 national organizations. Representative Don Young (AK) and Rick Laren (WA) introduced a companion bill (H.R. 5012) in the House. The legislation would strengthen, protect, and

expand access to the Summer Nutrition Programs, which help reduce childhood hunger and combat childhood obesity by providing low-income children access to healthy and nutritious meals over the summer months.

The Summer Meals Act would lower the threshold for community participation in the Summer Food Service Program from 50 percent of children receiving free or reduced-price school lunch to 40 percent. The act will also reduce paperwork by allowing public-private partner organizations to complete one application for all programs, including after-school meals,

weekend meals, meals during holidays and summer. It will also provide transportation for children to summer food sites. This would allow local government agencies and private nonprofits organizations to feed children year-round through the Summer Food Service Program.

The bill would also provide funding for transportation grants to fund innovative approaches and mobile meal trucks, and allow all sites to serve a third meal. The bill is critical in the fight against childhood obesity; increasing access to healthy foods and creating local jobs.



By Tom McClimon

The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to reauthorize the Travel Promotion, Enhancement and Modernization Act of 2012. This legis-

Brand USA Reauthorization Passes House

lation reauthorized Brand USA, which markets the U.S. abroad. This public-private partnership helps to stimulate U.S. economic growth, spur job creation and create a more positive impression of the U.S. around the world.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution in support of its reauthorization at its 82nd Annual Conference of

Mayors held in Dallas last month, and was instrumental in its passage in 2010. Last year, Brand USA attracted over 1.1 additional international travelers to the U.S. who spent over \$2.4 billion and supported over than 53,000 new American jobs.

The focus now turns to the Senate, which will soon begin its work on the legislation.

Congressional Resolution Celebrates CDBG 40th Anniversary

By Eugene T. Lowe

Representatives Chaka Fattah (PA) and Michael Turner, co-chairs of the Congressional Urban Caucus, have introduced H. Res. 668, "Supporting the goals and ideals of the Community Development Block Grant program." A group of bipartisan supporters joined in support of the resolution: Jim McGovern (MA), Louis Barletta (PA), Robert Brady (PA) and Chris Gibson (NY).

The CDBG program was signed into law August 22, 1974, and has become the signature model of federal-city partnership. It is recognized as a flexible program that allows cities to address a wide range of needs at the neighborhood level. The program has been so effective that it often serves as a guide for how other federal/local programs can be designed and implemented. CDBG has been used to deliver funding to hard hit areas after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. It also served as the basis for the effective Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP).

Even with its stellar accomplishments, CDBG has been deeply cut since fiscal year 2010 by some 25 percent. The program presently is funded at \$3.03 billion and could be cut by \$10 – \$20 million in the next fiscal year (2015).

With this recent background and history in mind, the Congressional Urban Caucus and the leadership of its co-chairs demonstrate that CDBG is strongly supported by Congress. The CDBG Coalition, which includes the Conference of Mayors, is encouraging all congressional members to support H. Res. 668, Supporting the goals and ideals of the Community Development Block Grant program. Call your congressional representatives and ask them to cosponsor the resolution. For more information on supporting this resolution, contact Fattah's office at jared.bass@mail.house.gov or Turner's office at vince.efre@mail.house.gov.

MAYORS BUSINESS COUNCIL

Member Profile

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- Transportation
- Healthcare IT Systems
- SmartGrid and Municipal Utilities

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Birmingham Mayor Bell Pledges Mayoral Action

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

President Obama announced a series of new commitments to the My Brother's Keeper initiative July 21 at a town hall session in a Washington (DC) school. Present were several mayors, including the co-chairs of the Conference of Mayors My Brother's Keeper Task Force, Birmingham Mayor William Bell and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter. Conference President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson announced the establishment of the task force during the organization's June annual meeting in Dallas.

Speaking on behalf of mayors at the town hall session, Bell pledged that mayors would "maximize the potential of current local efforts with funding and technical assistance from local city government and partners; identify replicable models that work in member cities around the country and apply them locally; and work towards streamlining efforts in cities to increase accountability and yield tangible results." He cautioned mayors that, "Failure is not an option; our children are depending on us."

Later, eight mayors met with White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs David Agnew, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson, Deputy Secretary of Education Jim Shelton, and David Williams of the National Convening Council, to discuss the initiative and how mayors are

Mayors in Washington for My Brother's Keeper Events

contributing to the effort. Mayors present in addition to Nutter and Bell were Boston Mayor Martin Walsh, Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin, Compton Mayor Aja Brown, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges, and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu.

The My Brother's Keeper Initiative

The President established the My Brother's Keeper initiative February 27 as "an interagency effort to improve measurably the expected educational and life outcomes for and address the persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color." It intends to help identify 1) public and private efforts that are working and how to expand upon them, 2) how federal policies and programs can better support these efforts, and 3) how state and local officials, the private sector, and the philanthropic community, can be better involved.

Federal Task Force Report

At the same time, the President established a federal interagency task force to develop recommendations for action and directed it to deliver a preliminary report within 90 days. That report was delivered to the President on May 30. As described in a White House fact sheet, it contains three cross-cutting recommendations, as well as more specific ones within six focus areas. The cross-cutting recommendations are:

- Launch a public-private campaign to actively recruit mentors for youth and improve the quality of mentoring programs;
- Make the status and progress of boys and young men of color and other populations more visible by improving data collection and transparency; and
- Support locally driven efforts that are more comprehensive – addressing the

educational, physical, social and emotional needs of young people – and that span multiple life stages from cradle-to-college.

The focus areas are:

- 1 Entering school ready to learn;
- 2 Reading at grade level by third grade;
- 3 Graduating from high school ready for college and career;
- 4 Completing postsecondary education or training;
- 5 Successfully entering the workforce; and
- 6 Reducing violence and providing a second chance.

July 21 Announcement

The President also announced July 21 that Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Deloitte CEO Joe Echevarria will launch the National Convening Council as "an independent private-sector initiative bringing together leaders from business, philanthropy and the faith, youth and nonprofit communities to combine their efforts to have a positive impact on boys and young men of color." Among the specific commitments announced that day:

- The NBA, the National Basketball Players Association and the National Basketball Retired Players Association announced a five-year commitment in partnership that will focus on recruiting new mentors and work with educators in at-risk schools to provide incentive programs that increase attendance and improve overall school performance. Johnson was instrumental in forming this partnership and connecting it to the White House effort.
- AT&T announced an \$18 million commitment to support mentoring and other education programs with a mentoring component.

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KEEPER

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- Becoming a Man (B.A.M.) and Match tutoring programs announced \$10 million in new funding to expand to three to five new cities over the next three years and support a large-scale study on the programs' long-term effects.
- The Emerson Collective, founded by

Laurene Powell Jobs, will collaborate with districts and educators to launch a competition to find and develop the best designs for next generation high schools, contributing \$50 million for this effort with other Silicon Valley partners.

- Citi Foundation is making a three-year, \$10 million commitment to create ServiceWorks, a national program to help 25,000 young people in ten

cities across the U.S. develop skills they need to prepare for college and careers.

- The leaders of 60 of the largest school systems in the country have joined in an unprecedented pledge to change life outcomes of boys and young men of color by better serving these students at every stage of their education.

Calendar of Events

(Updated 07/24/14)



2014

August 10-11

USCM Cities of Opportunity Task Force Meeting, New York City (USCM Leadership and Invitation Only). Contact: Ed Somers esomers@usmayors.org / 202-861-6706. Registration Now Open

August 28-29

USCM Food Policy Task Force Meeting, Louisville. Contact: Crystal Swann cswann@usmayors.org / 202-861-6707. Registration Now Open

September 27-29

USCM Fall Leadership Meeting, Sacramento (USCM Executive Committee, Advisory Board, and Chairs Only). Contact: Carol Edwards cedwards@usmayors.org / 202-293-7330; Sponsorship: Geri Powell gpowell@usmayors.org / 202-861-6774. Registration Available in July

USCM Community Policing Meeting at Clinton Presidential Center, and USCM Ports/Exports and Imports Meeting

Little Rock

- Community Policing: October 8-9
- Ports/Exports and Imports: October 10

Contact: Carol Edwards cedwards@usmayors.org / 202-293-7330; Sponsorship: Geri Powell gpowell@usmayors.org / 202-861-6774. Registration Available Soon

October 15-17

Municipal Waste Management Association (MWMA) Fall Summit, San Diego. Contact: Jubi Headley jheadley@usmayors.org / 202-861-6798. Registration Now Open

2015

January 21-23

83rd Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting, Washington (DC). Contact: Carol Edwards cedwards@usmayors.org / 202-293-7330; Sponsorship: Geri Powell gpowell@usmayors.org / 202-861-6774. Registration Open Fall 2014

For updates or changes, visit our website at
usmayors.org



By Kathy Wiggins

President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law July 22. The historic bipartisan bill amends and reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) through 2020. WIOA (H.R. 803), which first passed the Senate on June 25 and cleared the House on July 9, makes key improvements to the nation's workforce development system to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market; and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. WIOA is a carefully crafted compromise that properly balances federal, state and local interests that the Conference of Mayors supported. The bill reaffirms the strong partnership among local elected officials, local business leaders and the local work-

President Signs Historic Workforce Reauthorization Bill

force development system. It establishes regional workforce development areas that reflect local labor markets and economic development areas. In addition, the legislation provides local programs with significant flexibility, allowing service providers to meet the range of employment and training needs individuals might need. It also strengthens the role of local business in workforce development, thereby ensuring that those creating jobs are at the center of this important program.

WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. In general, the Act takes effect on July 1, 2015, the first full program year after enactment, unless otherwise noted. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has issued a guidance letter on the timeframes for implementation of these changes and proposed regulations reflecting the changes in WIOA. Two key implementation dates from that guidance letter state

that the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services must publish Notices of Proposed Rulemaking to implement WIOA no later than 180 days after enactment and the Department of Labor must establish an advisory committee on increasing competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities within 60 days of enactment.

The WIOA Resource Page

DOL, in coordination with the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS), is working diligently to ensure that states, local areas, other grantees, and stakeholders are prepared for implementation of WIOA. The WIOA Resource Page, housed on the DOL website (doleta.gov), will provide information and resources for states, local areas, non-profits and other grantees, and other stakeholders to assist with implementation of the Act. This page will be updated to reflect newly developed materials, including responses to frequently asked questions.

INSOLVENCY

from page 1

Nearly equal majorities of each party caucus supported the measure, with 181 Republicans and 186 Democrats voting to approve the legislation.

Action Now Shifts to Senate

Senate leaders have reached an agreement allowing the House-passed bill (H.R. 5021) to come before the full Senate, subject to approval by a 60-vote majority. In addition, the agreement also allows individual votes on four amendments only, subject to the same 60-vote requirement.

One amendment, to be offered by Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden

(OR) and Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (UT), would substitute other revenue-raisers for those contained in the House bill.

Another bipartisan amendment, championed by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (CA) along with Senators Tom Carper (DE) and Bob Corker (TN), would shorten the MAP-21 extension period until the end of 2014. The authors argue this deadline will force Congress to come back after the November election and act hopefully on a multi-year transportation reauthorization.

Under the unanimous consent agreement, Senator Mike Lee (UT) will offer his amendment to "devolve" the federal transportation program, meaning most federal surface transportation responsibilities and

resource commitments would be shifted to the states and local governments. Likewise, the federal gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon would be reduced to just below four cents per gallon, allowing states to replace whatever share of lost revenues they deem necessary by raising state gas taxes or through other actions.

Finally, Senator Pat Toomey (PA) will be permitted to offer his amendment exempting road and bridge rebuilding projects after disasters from any federal environmental reviews and permit requirements.

Following Senate action on the legislation, House and Senate leaders would have to resolve any differences between the two measures before sending final legislation to the President for his signature.



By Kevin McCarty

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced a comprehensive package of proposed rules to improve the safety of rail shipments of flammable materials, notably crude oil and ethanol. Foxx outlined the details of the Administration's plan for the safer shipment of large quantities of flammable materials by rail during a July 23 press conference in Washington (DC).

In discussing the plan, Foxx said, "While we have made unprecedented progress through voluntary agreements and emergency orders, today's proposal represents our most significant progress yet in developing and enforcing new rules to ensure that all flammable liquids, including Bakken crude oil and ethanol, are transported safely."

One key element of the new rail safety package is a proposed rule that would remove outdated rail cars from service within five years, and set new speed limits on trains shipping certain flammable liquids or trains using older and unretrofitted rail cars.

"From his first days in office, Secretary Foxx has been an active leader in

DOT Secretary Foxx Proposes New Rules to Improve Safety of Rail Shipments of Crude Oil, Hazardous Materials

the effort to keep our communities safe from rail accidents involving crude oil shipments, including his work to increase the transparency of rail shipments and obtain important testing data from oil companies," said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel in a statement of the plan.

Senator Patty Murray (WA), who chairs the Appropriations Subcommittee providing funding for U.S. DOT, said, "The proposed rule released today by Secretary Foxx is certainly a step in the right direction, but there is still more work to be done, by both regulators and industry, to ensure that crude oil can be transported safely by rail through communities across the United States."

Rules Propose New Standards for Rail Cars, Routing

The proposed rules also require freight rail carriers to perform a routing analysis for any "high-hazard flammable train" (HTFF) to consider 27 safety and security factors and select routes based on these

findings. The proposals also seek to codify previously-adopted requirements to notify State Emergency Response Commissions or appropriate state delegated entities about the operation of trains carrying more than one million gallons of Bakken crude. New standards for tank cars constructed after October 1, 2015 and used for shipping flammable liquids as part of a HTFF are also included in the package.

Another proposed rule in the package is an initial proposal pertaining to oil spill response plans and their applicability to rail. The proposed rules also cite the safety risks associated with the ever-increasing numbers of shipments, which last year totaled 415,000 rail-carloads, up from 9,500 rail-carloads in 2008.

U.S. DOT is providing only a 60-day comment period on its proposed rules, reflecting the urgency of the safety concerns and need to move forward with new requirements to protect communities.

USCM on the WEB

usmayors.org





By Kevin McCarty

President Obama Establishes “Build America Transportation Investment Center” to Help Cities Finance Projects

President Barack Obama recently announced his “Build America Investment Initiative,” which includes the creation of a new center at the U.S. Department of Transportation to help cities, counties and states finance their various transportation infrastructure needs.

Called the “Build America Transportation Investment Center,” the White House indicates that, “This center will serve as a one-stop shop for state and local governments, private and public developers and investors seeking to utilize innovative strategies for transportation infrastructure projects.”

The center – to be created within 120 days – will make U.S. DOT credit programs more understandable and accessible to cities, other local governments, and states. It will provide information on existing departmental resources such as the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program (RRIF) as well as the use of Private Activity Bonds. It will also offer technical assistance including best practices, and work with local and state entities on the Interagency Infrastructure Permitting Improvement Center to help reduce delays and uncertainty.

The July 17 Presidential Memorandum launches a “government-wide initiative to increase infrastructure investment and economic growth by engaging with state and local governments and private sector investors to encourage collaboration, expand the market for public-private partnerships (PPPs) and put federal credit programs to greater use.”



The President’s directive sets forth a broad new policy for federal government agencies in supporting local and state governments in advancing their infrastructure needs: “It shall be the policy of the federal government for all executive departments and agencies to encourage awareness and understanding among state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and among federal infrastructure financing programs and in the private sector, of the diverse opportunities for collaboration in developing, maintaining, upgrading, and financing infrastructure. It shall also be the policy of the federal government for all agencies to facilitate, as appropriate, greater

public and private partnership and collaboration, including with international investors and companies, to develop, improve, and maintain infrastructure across the country where and when economically and environmentally beneficial and in the public interest.”

In addition to the new center, the President’s directive establishes a “Build America Interagency Working Group,” chaired by Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, to undertake a focused review of with the “best and brightest from the public and private sector” to find ways to expand and increase private investment and collaboration in infrastructure beyond the transportation sector. In conducting its review, the special working group is directed to consult with local and state government leaders as well as industry, labor, and other leaders as it develops its recommendations to the President within a 120-day timeframe.

Finally, the U.S. Treasury Department will host a special summit on Infrastructure Investment in the U.S. on September 9, where it will work with public and private leaders to look at innovative financing approaches to infrastructure and other resources to further project development.



By Kevin McCarty

Members of a special Presidential task force on climate preparedness and resilience met for the last time July 16 at a White House session, where President Barack Obama joined with members serving on the panel to thank them for their work and leadership. Thirteen of the 26 task force members were mayors, including several leaders of the Conference of Mayors.

Obama told members of his State, Local and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, "These leaders are here because states and communities that they represent are already dealing with the effects of climate change. They're seeing rising sea levels, more powerful hurricanes, more intense heatwaves, severe droughts, and wildfires out west. So this is already happening, and these leaders understand that climate change is a threat to public safety, it's a threat to public health and to something that we want to emphasize today – the infrastructure upon which our economy depends."

"And today I'm announcing a series of new steps. We're going to do more, including new data and 3D maps to help state, local officials in communities understand which areas and which infrastructure are at risk as a consequence of climate change. We're going to help communities improve their electric grids, build stronger seawalls and natural barriers, and protect their water supplies. We're also going to invest in stronger and more resilient infrastructure," he said.

Federal Agencies Now Build Upon Work of Presidential Climate Task Force

President Commits \$1 Billion in Competitive Funds

The President also talked about a new initiative, which he first announced in June, which will provide up to \$1 billion in federal funding to communities on a competitive basis to plan and adapt their communities to changing climatic conditions. "We're going to announce the specifics about who can compete, how we can learn from communities that are rebuilding stronger from disasters like Hurricane Sandy and flooding in Colorado. We want the best ideas to become models for the whole country. And the idea of this competition is not just the communities that win a grant are able to improve their infrastructure but what we're also going to be doing is hopefully lifting everybody's game and making sure that people in their planning are thinking about these issues as they move forward."

"So the bottom line is investing in our infrastructure, protecting our communities, ensuring the health and safety of our citizens – none of this should be a partisan issue. This is something that Democrats, Republicans, independents all care about and the leaders who are sitting around this table prove that today and prove it every day," he said, concluding his remarks.

The task force process, which included meetings and forums in Carmel (IN), Des Moines, Los Angeles and Washington (DC) reportedly generated more than 400 recommendations to inform the work of various federal departments and agencies now working to identify federal policy and rule changes to support

local and state adaptation efforts. The final report, which will include details on the many federal actions being taken to respond to the work of the local, state and tribal leaders serving on the task force, is expected in about six months.

Among the mayors serving on the special task force were Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Past Conference of Mayors President Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Conference of Mayors Trustee and Climate Protection and Energy Independence Task Force Co-Chair Carmel (IN) Mayor James Brainard, Conference of Mayors Trustee Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie, and Conference of Mayors Advisory Board Member Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker.

Other mayors on the task force are Greensburg Mayor Bob Dixson, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell, Houston Mayor Annise Parker, Perdido Beach Mayor Patsy Parker, Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero, Fort Collins Mayor Karen Weitkunat, and Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer.

Coinciding with the task force meeting, President Obama also released additional details of his Administration's efforts to support mayors and other local, state and tribal leaders. For more information on this White House announcement, go to the website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/16/fact-sheet-taking-action-support-state-local-and-tribal-leaders-they-pre>.



By Larry Jones

In response to the House passage of a Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act on July 15, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced a new bill on the same day that would combine the Marketplace Fairness Act (MFA) with a ten-year extension of the Internet Tax Freedom Act (ITFA). The move was made to try to keep pressure on the House to pass the MFA. Many of the cosponsors of the new bill, the Marketplace and Internet Tax Freedom Act (S. 2609), are insisting that ITFA should only be acted on if MFA is attached. Cosponsors include Senators Richard Durbin (IL), Michael Enzi (WY), Lamar Alexander (TN), Heidi Heitkamp (ND), Susan Collins (ME), Mark Pryor (AR), Mary Landrieu (LA), Roy Blunt (MO), Jack Reed (RI), Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), Benjamin Cardin (MD), Tim Johnson (SD), Amy Klobuchar (MN) and Al Franken (MN).

After expressing support for the combined bill, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV) on July 21 discussed the possibility of moving a separate short-term extension of ITFA which would have extended the expiration date of ITFA from November 1 to sometime in late December, and given cosponsors more time to build support for the new combined bill. At the same it would have allowed members to get through the November elections, and given them to the end of the year to try to reach agreement on the combined measure. However several Senators, who desire to keep the pressure on the House to take action on the MFA, placed a hold on the short-term extension. The prospect for its passage remains unclear.

The House and Senate are divided over the course of action for the MFA and ITFA bills. The Senate leadership wants

New Marketplace, Internet Tax Freedom Act Bill Introduced

to combine the two bills to force the House to act on MFA before the end of the year. The House opposes the Senate passed MFA and wants to keep the two bills separate. Final passage of S. 743, which will enable state and local governments to collect an estimated \$23 billion in taxes on purchases made over the Internet, is a high priority in the Senate.

Although the Senate passed the measure last year by a strong bipartisan majority (69 – 27), it has been stalled in the House due to strong opposition from Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (VA), whose committee has jurisdiction over the issue. Chairman Goodlatte opposes the Senate MFA because he said it would be too burdensome to small businesses, subject online retailers to multiple state audits, and create complications by giving states the power to enforce its tax laws on businesses located in other states.

Under the Senate passed MFA, small businesses with under a million dollars in annual remote sales (this would exempt just about all small businesses) would be exempt and state and local governments would be required to simplify their tax administration and collection systems to address any complications related to states enforcing their tax laws on businesses located in other states. States have expressed a willingness to work with the House leadership to find language that further addresses any concerns about multiple state audits.

Since last year, Goodlatte has told stakeholders he would develop his own MFA bill. And while he released a set of guiding principles for developing a bill last September, he has not yet introduced

or shared a draft proposal. On the other hand, the House has given high priority to extending the life of the Internet Tax Freedom Act, which is scheduled to expire on November 1. Goodlatte cosponsored and spearheaded an effort that led to the House passage of the Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act (H.R. 3086) by voice-vote on July 15.



When the law was enacted in 1998, a temporary ban was imposed on state and local taxes on Internet access fees to give the Internet time to grow and prosper. State and local groups have always opposed a permanent ban because it would end the grandfather clause, which allowed seven states (and many localities within those states: Hawaii, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas and Wisconsin) that collected taxes on Internet access fees before the original law was approved, to continue collecting such taxes. According to a July 10 paper released by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) these states and their localities stand to lose an estimated \$500 million in revenues annually if H.R. 3086 is enacted. Further, the paper explains that the permanent ban would also deny

See TAX FREEDOM on page 18



By Kevin McCarty

FCC Proposes E-rate Program Changes to Bring High-speed Connections to Schools, Libraries

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) took a big step forward in modernizing the agency's E-rate program. The action responds to mayors, educators, and others who have been urging agency leaders to update the program, including its funding rules, to increase the deployment of high-speed Wi-Fi and broadband at schools and libraries.

In its release, the FCC explains that the proposals increase the focus on the "largest and most urgent need – closing the Wi-Fi gap – while transitioning support away from legacy technologies to 21st Century broadband connectivity, ensuring E-rate money is spent smartly, and improving program administration. The reform will expand Wi-Fi to more than ten million students in 2015 alone."

As it further describes, the Modernization Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRN) seek to accomplish three key goals: closing the Wi-Fi gap, maximizing E-rate spending and making the E-rate application processes faster, simpler, and more efficient.

These key issues were raised earlier this year by Conference of Mayors leaders in a March 17 letter to Chairman Tom Wheeler and the other four FCC Commissioners. In underscoring the need to modernize the E-rate program, the mayors wrote, "It's the single most important step we can take to connect our children to digital learning opportunities that will give them the technological skills they need for the future." To view the Conference of Mayors leadership letter to the

FCC Chairman, go to the website: usmayors.org/E-rateletter.

Comments on the proposed E-rate program changes as set forth in the FNPRN are due into the agency's docket – WC Docket No. 13-184 – by September 15, with reply comments due September 30.

The full Modernization Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking are available at https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-14-99A1.pdf. The agency also plans a related release at a later date, which will seek comments on a revised Eligible Services List (ESL) consistent with the Order.

This FCC action is an initial, although important, step in what will be a lengthy process to fully modernize the E-rate program.

TAX FREEDOM

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non-grandfathered states almost \$6.5 billion in potential state and local sales tax revenues each year.

It would further give Internet users an unfair tax advantage over cable and other telecommunications users. For example in the CBPP paper, it is explained that, "If a state taxes cable television service, it is unfair for Congress to exempt the monthly fee for Internet access that other people pay to be able to stream TV shows over the Internet." The paper further points out that for state and local governments "...the sales

tax base is also eroding significantly as a growing number of consumers switch from taxable cable TV service, land line phones, and music CDs to cheaper (or free) alternatives they can obtain via the Internet, such as Skype for phone calls and Spotify for music."

So far the Senate seems unwilling to take up a permanent stand-alone ITFA bill and the House seems unwilling to take up a joint MFA/temporary ITFA bill. It is hoped that members from both Houses will find a way to reach agreement on legislation before the end of the year, granting final approval to MFA and a temporary extension to ITFA that will not cause further erosion of state and local revenues.



Best Practices

Providence Talks: Building Vocabulary from Day One

By Providence Mayor Angel Taveras

Here in Providence, we've made early childhood learning a top priority. We have no other choice: data shows that two-thirds of our children arrive for the first day of kindergarten already behind on national literacy benchmarks. Our efforts to ensure that every child is reading on grade level by the end of third grade have won Providence the All-America Award for grade level reading from the National Civic League.

But every day more research confirms that how children develop in the early years before they arrive in school is a critical factor in future school performance and success later in life. For a child's vocabulary to develop fully, children need to hear at least 21,000 words per day. But children in the lowest income bracket fall short of

that benchmark by more than 8,000 words every day. By the time a child growing up in a low-income household reaches their fourth birthday, he or she will have heard between about 20 and 30 million fewer words than their peers in middle- and high-income households.

Talking to one's baby doesn't just promote vocabulary development, but also brain development more broadly. At birth, a child will have developed all of the neurons that will carry him or her through adult life. In the first year of a baby's life, brain size doubles, and at the age of three, the brain is already at 80 percent of its adult volume. Additionally, synapses are formed at a much faster rate between the ages of zero and three. Every verbal interaction a parent

or caregiver has with a baby strengthens the neural connections within the baby's rapidly growing brain.

Research shows that most children learn at the same rate in school. Due to disparities in vocabulary, low-income students start out at a disadvantage. Each summer, with unequal access to summer learning opportunities, this achievement gap widens. This growing inequality can lead to disparities in school readiness, long-term health outcomes, earnings, and family stability for years to come.



Our award-winning "Providence Talks" program — funded with a \$5 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies — is designed to close the 30-million-word gap and ensure that children from low-income families begin school on a level playing field with their peers. Providence Talks aims to empower families with the additional tools and resources necessary to help build their children's vocabularies from day one. It is the first citywide effort to close the word gap.

Providence Talks combines new information technology with existing effective home visitation programs. Participating families receive a small "word pedometer" that generates charts and graphs showing the number of words and conversations that their child engages with over the



Providence Mayor Angel Taveras

course of a day. This information is shared with families by a home visitor, and coaching sessions help them strengthen their household auditory environment. Free books and other resources are designed to help prepare our youngest learners for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Our program is just getting under way, but preliminary data demonstrates dramatic gains in word and conversation count — gains that we think will make a difference in years to come. Over two years, the program will expand from the initial pilot, now open to 75 early head start families, to a citywide scale. We hope that Providence Talks can become a model for other cities, so that more of our nation's children from low-income families enter school's starting gate on a level playing field with their wealthier peers.

Mayors are invited to submit the "Best Practices" of their cities to U.S. MAYOR. Contact Public Affairs at 202-293-7330 or send e-mail to usmayor@usmayors.org

