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CITIES OF OPPORTUNITY TASK FORCE LAUNCHED IN NEW YORK CITY



New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and more than 30 mayors address the media on the grounds of Gracie Mansion.

Income Inequality, Early Childhood Education, Broadband Focus of “Commitment to Action”

By Ed Somers and Elena Temple-Webb

Local innovations, supported by state and federal policy changes, are required to reduce the widening wage gap and income inequality in America’s cities. This was the conclusion of the first meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Cities of Opportunity Task Force, held in New York City August 10-11.

Under the leadership of Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Task Force Chair New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, and Task Force Vice Chair Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, more than 30 mayors from cities of all sizes and regions of the country gathered in Gracie Mansion – de Blasio’s official residence – for extensive discussions on immediate actions that can be taken to strengthen the middle class.

To help frame the meeting, the Conference of Mayors and IHS Global Insight released a new report that found that jobs gained during the economic recovery from the Great Recession pay an average of 23 percent less than the jobs lost during the recession. The report also shows that the gap between low- and higher-income households is growing and will continue into the foreseeable future. In 2012, the latest year for which figures

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**August 15, 2014
Washington (DC)**

In New York this week, mayors, at the invitation of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, assembled at Gracie Mansion in New York City. Built in 1799, located on the East River, Gracie Mansion is one of the oldest surviving wood structures left in Manhattan. This house has served as the official residence of the New York City mayor since 1942. This place has been the site of many turning points and defining moments in the history of The United States Conference of Mayors.

Conference President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson appointed New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio as Chair of our new Cities of Opportunity Task Force. Forty mayors participated in a give-and-take discussion of three issues: the wage gap, broadband, and early childhood education. Mayor de Blasio, in his campaign for mayor of New York, ran hard on the issue of income equality. And now, he takes this message with a commitment to action on the best practices on a national stage, a pledge that was signed by the overwhelming majority of mayors present and others who will also join the effort in the months to come. The Commitment to Action, and goals set by the mayors, will work together and move forward a pro-growth agenda to make our cities better and stronger and more livable for our people. All mayors agree that Washington is stalled at a time when the mayors and cities are making a difference for the promising future ahead of us. This plan for action fits the vision given to us by our Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson in Dallas at our Annual Meeting when he called us to recognize and commit to the Cities 3.0 era of today.

The statement made earlier this year by President Kevin Johnson that mayors will not wait for a gridlocked Washington was echoed here this week by our Task Force Chair New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. In addition to hosting and moderating our meeting at Gracie, Mayor de Blasio let the world know that our mayors are going to demand and create a political atmosphere to hold those in power to be accountable to the millions of people who live in our cities.

The mayor of New York City states that we haven't had a comprehensive urban policy since the 70s. New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu recalls how his father, former New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu, as President of the Conference, led the coalition of mayors in the 70s who forged a national urban policy producing strong and successful bipartisan federal-city partnerships. Today, Conference President Johnson and the mayors assembled look back in our history to learn. But they don't dwell on it. There is a determination here about what they must do together now and in the near future. The mayors today are very practical and they are very political. I have been through and felt these defining moments before. There's a vacuum now for leadership, for a political action agenda for the Metro Mayors of America. The energy, determination, and vigor of these mayors assembled this week is not going away.



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Crafting Innovative Anti-discrimination Policies Using Human Rights

By Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy

In March, Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker joined a delegation of high-level U.S. officials at the U.N. in Geneva to share how mayors help the United States make human rights – including equality, non-discrimination and opportunity – a reality. Becker's participation in the delegation is indicative of a larger trend: increased recognition that human rights offer a tool to craft innovative policies.

Last November, as some of America's largest cities went to the polls to elect new mayors, a spotlight was shone on the promise of local governance for promoting social change. What proved important for New Yorkers and Bostonians, among others, was the extent to which their mayoral hopefuls would tackle issues like income inequality, access to affordable housing, fostering safety in communities of color, and improving immigrant inclusion. In determining when and how to address these issues, human rights provide a tool that can lead to real progress.

My city, Eugene (OR), has found support in the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), to which the United States is a party. CERD offers a broader definition of discrimination than the U.S. Constitution and some federal and state laws. It goes beyond intentional discrimination to emphasize the importance of addressing policies with a disparate impact. Utilizing a human rights framework that incorporates the CERD definition of discrimination, Eugene has undertaken multiple efforts to improve service delivery, work toward more equitable outcomes, and address those policies that, regardless of their intent, have a disparate impact on minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

Eugene has 20 years experience

operationalizing human rights, working through the city-sponsored Human Rights Commission. Similar to other human rights commissions throughout the country, the Eugene Human Rights Commission collaborates with community advocacy organizations. Generations of local government staff have pushed Eugene to address deeper and deeper levels of inequity. This culminated in Eugene's 2009 creation of a five-year Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan (DESP). Relying heavily on human rights principles, the DESP has addressed equity issues across all six city departments and specified concrete, measurable outcomes to be achieved in each year. The development and implementation of the plan required buy-in and significant support from elected officials and executive leadership within the city. While strong leadership from the top was essential, the work of the DESP filters down to every worker within the city, requiring a grass-roots implementation to make ideals of equity an organizational reality.

Eugene is neither the first nor the only city to promote equality through the lens of human rights. Over 15 years ago, San Francisco embraced the international human rights principles from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to alleviate gender inequity in city budget, employment and services. San Francisco passed an ordinance establishing the key principles of CEDAW – including equality of opportunity for women and girls and freedom from gender-based discrimination – and establishing a process to identify and alleviate gender inequity. The ordinance called on the city to address discrimination in specific areas, including economic development, healthcare and violence against women. The ordinance was amended in 2002 to contain



Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy

a definition of racial discrimination that mirrored the definition enunciated in CERD, based on the belief that this better addresses patterns of inequality and gender discrimination may be interconnected with discrimination on other grounds.

At its annual meeting this June, The U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted policy urging cities across the United States to participate in the Cities for CEDAW initiative, and pass local resolutions or ordinances reflecting the principles of CEDAW. Cities for CEDAW was launched at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women this March.

In 2011, Madison passed a resolution recognizing housing as a human right and prioritized efforts to meet basic housing needs in the city. The resolution notes Madison's obligations to eliminate policies that discriminate based on race and commits to assess the affordability and accessibility of housing and calls for a responsive housing strategy to

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are available, 261 (73 percent) out of 357 metros had a larger share of poorer households (those making less than \$35,000 per year), than upper income households of above \$75,000.

Under the guidance of Mayor de Blasio, the initial work of the task force was focused on three issues: reducing income inequality, promoting early childhood education, and expanding access to broadband. Mayor de Blasio made clear that other key issues will be addressed by the task force in the coming months, including housing and transportation.

While in Gracie Mansion, the mayors spent three hours with no press highlighting best practices taking place in cities to address the initial policy areas.

Following discussions leading up to the New York City meeting, the task force released a "Commitment to Action" that supporting mayors signed during a closing press conference.

The Commitment to Action contains principles that will guide the work of the task force, recommendations for local



New York City Mayor de Blasio leads mayors in signing the "Commitment to Action."

actions in the three beginning policy areas, and federal policy changes needed to support local innovation.

In commenting on the work of the task force, Mayor de Blasio said, "This is an

organic way of creating forward motion on a national urban agenda. This is mayors around the country gathered to support each other, to support innovation. And also to show from the ground up, what our federal government needs to do to support our cities. We're showing by example where we need to go as a country."

Mayor de Blasio also reflected on the long history of New York City and The U.S. Conference of Mayors working together to strengthen the nation. "The power of having this meeting at Gracie Mansion is it recalls some very important history. It recalls the fact that Mayor LaGuardia – the first occupant at Gracie Mansion – was also one of the founders of The U.S. Conference of Mayors. And it was at a time of tremendous economic strain, when the nation was imperiled economically and mayors gathered together to make a difference. In fact, The U.S. Conference of Mayors was largely created as a response to the Great Depression. And Mayor LaGuardia – just shortly into his first term in 1934 – gathered The U.S. Conference



Right to left, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, USCM Past President Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, Portland (OR) Mayor Charlie Hales, Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu.

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of Mayors here at Gracie Mansion for a three-day conference on the unemployment crisis that gripped the nation.

"That group of mayors offered President Roosevelt a bold set of recommendations and those recommendations largely came to life in the New Deal because the mayors organized together to achieve them and push their congressional representatives to achieve them. So we have something here that guides us. What The U.S. Conference of Mayors has done throughout its history – the role that Gracie Mansion has played, the role mayors have played – in creating and enforcing

"What The U.S. Conference of Mayors has done throughout its history – the role that Gracie Mansion has played, the role mayors have played – in creating and enforcing a federal agenda that really made a difference... we're going to take inspiration from that now and act upon it."

**– Task Force Chair
New York City
Mayor Bill de Blasio**



Left to right, USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Task Force Chair New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Task Force Vice Chair Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

a federal agenda that really made a difference. We're going to take inspiration from that now and act upon it."

Stressing how this effort fits into his theme of Cities 3.0 and a pro-growth agenda, Mayor Johnson stated, "While

the economy is picking up steam, income inequality and wage gaps are an alarming trend that must be addressed... We cannot put our heads in the sand on these

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Highlighting his work to raise the minimum wage to \$13 over four years, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said during the press conference, "If a parent chooses work, work should pay and no child should ever be raised in poverty."

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issues... The nation's mayors have an obligation to do what we can to address issues of inequality in this country while Washington languishes in dysfunction."

Mayor Walsh said during the press conference, "The most important thing that was said at the table or wasn't said at the table was this isn't a Democrat thing, this isn't a Republican thing, this is the right thing to do and this is a bipartisan effort that we need to continue to move forward. We need to make sure we close that gap."

Comparing what mayors do to other levels of government, Houston Mayor Annise Parker stated that, "The difference in mayors who come together in The U.S. Conference of Mayors, from other levels of government, is that we came today to share ideas, to talk about best practices – but we're going to leave this place and implement."

And Conference of Mayors Past President Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter summed up the meeting saying, "If you want to see action, if you want to watch people doing something, come to our cities, talk to mayors. We get stuff done."

Next Stop – Sacramento

The Commitment to Action and work of the Cities of Opportunity Task Force will be discussed in detail during the upcoming Conference of Mayors Fall Leadership Meeting in Sacramento September 27-29.



USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran reflects on the history of The U.S. Conference of Mayors and New York City, telling how when the city was on the verge of bankruptcy in the 1970s, then USCM President New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu called mayors from across the country to Washington (DC) to demand that the federal government help America's largest city. As former Denver Mayor William H. McNichols stated, "Every city in the nation is like a tenant in the same building... If somebody says the third floor is going to collapse, you can't say that it is not going to bother me because I am on the second floor."

Attending Mayors

The following mayors attended the New York City meeting:

Kevin Johnson, Sacramento; Bill de Blasio, New York City; Martin J. Walsh, Boston; Michael A. Nutter, Philadelphia; Rahm Emanuel, Chicago; Kathy Sheehan, Albany; Richard J. Berry, Albuquerque; Ed Pawlowski, Allentown; Lee

Leffingwell, Austin; Bill Finch, Bridgeport; Byron Brown, Buffalo; James Brainard, Carmel (IN); Stephen Benjamin, Columbia (SC); Nan Whaley, Dayton; J. Christian Bollwage, Elizabeth; Pedro Segarra, Hartford; Annise Parker, Houston; Steven Fulop, Jersey City; Sylvester "Sly" James, Kansas City (MO); Paul Soglin, Madison; Toni Harp, New Haven; Mitchell Landrieu, New Orleans; Setti Warren, Newton; Frank Ortis, Pembroke Pines; Brian Wahler, Piscataway; Charlie Hales, Portland (OR); Lovely Warren, Rochester (NY); Ralph Becker, Salt Lake City; Javier Gonzales, Santa Fe; Gary McCarthy, Schenectady; Stephanie Miner, Syracuse; Marilyn Strickland, Tacoma; John Marks, Tallahassee; Vincent C. Gray, Washington; Dennis P. Williams, Wilmington (DE).

"The nation's mayors have an obligation to do what we can to address issues of inequality in this country while Washington languishes in dysfunction."

– USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson

HUD Secretary Castro Briefs Mayors at Gracie Mansion

By Eugene T. Lowe

HUD Secretary Julian Castro spoke to the mayors for the first time in his new position before the Cities of Opportunity Task Force meeting began at Gracie Mansion. Thanking the mayors for their work, Castro said that we are now in the century of cities and that we must find ways to partner throughout our country. This is especially true in that we are in the midst of global competition.

The Secretary said that President Obama is committed to partner with mayors. "The Administration is clearly focused on local communities," he said. Castro cited the President's support for the major issues of the task force: early childhood education (universal pre-k), and an increase in the minimum wage.

Other issues mentioned by Castro included the Administration's goal of ending veteran homelessness by the end of 2015, addressing the affordable housing crunch and providing citizens with access to credit. He reminded the mayors of the Promise Zones and that they should "look forward to the process in the coming months."



At left, HUD Secretary Julian Castro Speaks to mayors at the Cities for Opportunity Task Force meeting with Task Force Chair New York City Mayor de Blasio, right.

Newton Mayor Setti Warren, Chair of the Community Development and Housing Committee of the Conference

Other issues mentioned by Castro included the Administration's goal of ending veteran homelessness by the end of 2015, addressing the affordable housing crunch and providing citizens with access to credit.

of Mayors, asked Castro about the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Warren focused on the deep cuts made to CDBG over the last several years, and the mayors' push to get an increase in the program to a significant funding level. The Secretary said that as mayor of San Antonio, he saw the impact of the cuts in CDBG. He told the mayors that funding rental housing assistance is a hurdle to funding CDBG as housing assistance takes up 84 percent of the HUD budget and continues to grow. Still the Secretary is very supportive of the CDBG program.



CITIES OF OPPORTUNITY TASK FORCE COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Mayor Bill de Blasio, Chair

Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Vice-Chair

The United States is a country that has long valued opportunity, fairness, and equality. Yet, too many Americans, no matter how hard they work or try to find work, have stagnant or low incomes, dwindling wealth and trouble affording life's basic necessities, like housing, food and health care. As members of the Cities of Opportunity Task force, we recognize that rising inequality and declining opportunity are threats to our fundamental values and to the nation's economic growth.

We agree that bold action and a multifaceted approach are required to create more genuine opportunities for all residents and create more equitable cities. And today, we commit to work together to respond to this crisis and take action to leverage the power of municipal governments to advance local strategies and a national, common equality agenda.

We have agreed that the following principles will guide the work of the Cities of Opportunity Task Force:

- Produce economic stability for city residents that allows residents to meet their basic needs;
- Increase upward mobility of residents to create a vibrant and expanding middle class that reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of our nation;
- Make cities affordable, accessible, livable, sustainable, and inclusive places to live;
- Maximize city infrastructure, investment, purchasing power, and other leveraging tools to expand opportunities and equality for residents; and
- Ensure that the federal and state governments recognize the importance of cities in producing national prosperity and equality and empower local governments.

We have agreed to support and advance this common agenda in our own cities, to the fullest extent possible and support other cities' efforts to take similar actions. We will also build together a national urban agenda together. We have committed to begin by putting income inequality, early childhood education and broadband at the center of the task force's national equity agenda, and to grow it to include other critical issues, such as affordable housing and transportation.

We agree to advance at least one of the following strategies under each issue area:

Income Inequality

- Local autonomy over wage laws: Work to obtain local authority to make changes to minimum wage and benefits laws affecting city residents, where it does not exist.
- Better wages in our cities: Support better wages in our cities, such as increasing the minimum wage or getting businesses that receive substantial city subsidies to pay living wages or hire hard-to-employ workers.
- Benefits to make wages work: Make work pay by improving supports to help workers and their families, such as paid sick leave, paid family leave, and other benefits for workers.
- Financial empowerment and youth employment: Support efforts to enhance financial empowerment and promote employment opportunities for city youth.

Early Childhood Education

- Create or expand pre-kindergarten and access to childcare: Work to provide or expand pre-kindergarten and other early childhood education and childcare programs that are accessible for all children, particularly children from low-income families.
- Promote high-quality education: Address the inequality in school systems and close the early childhood education achievement gaps to create opportunities for every child and better prepare our 21st century workforce.

Broadband

- Provide for 21st century broadband and bridge the digital divide: Work to ensure that 21st century broadband services are provided to all residents – including lower income residents and start-up businesses. Work to provide education and training to low-income residents, people of color, and women to ensure technological efficacy, creating new opportunities.
- Promote network neutrality through municipal franchise options: Create corporate guidelines that protect network neutrality, including but not limited to comprehensive non-discrimination of lawful content.

In support of the above efforts, we also agree to work together to achieve federal action on:

- Nationwide minimum wage increase: Support increasing the federal minimum wage.
- Funding Commitments for early childhood education: Advocate for existing federal programs that support early childhood education.
- Nationwide universal pre-kindergarten: Support expanded access to high-quality early childhood education for children across the nation.
- Broadband advocacy and initiative: Advocate for federal programs and initiatives that bolster technological innovation, and accelerate and diversify the workforce pipeline in technology for low-income individuals and people of color.

Selected News Clips:**Conference of Mayors Metro Economies Report on Wage Gap, Income Inequality****TV**

Bloomberg TV: [Mayor Parker's Interview on Bloomberg's Bottom Line](#)

Bloomberg TV: [Mayor Walsh's Interview on Bloomberg's Surveillance](#)

Radio

NPR All Things Considered: [A Snapshot of the Spike in Inequality, As Seen from Dayton](#)

Bloomberg Radio: [Mayor Walsh Interviews with Kathleen Hays and Vonnie Quinn](#)

Print

Bloomberg: [Jobs Added Post-Recession in U.S. Pay 23% Less, Report Says](#)

Bloomberg Businessweek: [America's Low-Paying Recovery: More Jobs Than Ever, Worse Wages](#)

Governing: [Report Examines Income Gaps Across Metro Areas](#)

New York Times : [Task Force of Mayors Addresses Income Gap](#)

NPR All Things Considered: [A Snapshot Of The Spike In Inequality, As Seen From Dayton](#)

US News: [Low-Wage Jobs Gained During Recovery Strain Wage Gap](#)

Washington Post : [Income inequality seems to be rising in more than 2 in 3 metro areas](#)

Albuquerque Business First: [Recovery delivering more jobs but less money, report says](#)

Boston Globe: [Wage gap less pronounced in Boston](#)

Chicago Tribune: [Jobs coming back post-recession, but with much lower pay, study says](#)

Denver Post: [Income gap widens in Colorado and nationally as new jobs pay less](#)

Indianapolis Star: [Report: Wage gap growing rapidly in Indy area](#)

LA Times: [Lower-paying jobs dominate economic recovery, study finds](#)

Lewiston – Auburn Sun Journal: [Lewiston-Auburn tops national charts in income gap between rich and poor](#)

Midland Report Telegram: [Global think tank releases numbers on Midland's wage gap](#)

NJ Online: [Wages have yet to recover from recession, study shows](#)

Oakland Tribune: [Santa Clara County has highest median household income in nation, but wealth gap widens](#)

Providence Journal: [Study: New jobs created since recession pay 23 percent less than those lost](#)

Saint Louis Today: [Mayors' report tracks growing wage gap, but sees St. Louis as 'balanced'](#)

San Francisco Gate: [Rich get richer, while middle- and low-income fall behind, U.S. Conference of Mayors' report concludes](#)

Syracuse.com: [Miner eyeing plan for municipal broadband in Syracuse](#)

Tampa Bay: [In lesser jobs, American pay down 23 percent since downturn](#)

The Journal Gazette: [Jobs back after recession; pay lags](#)

The Journal Sentinel: [Wages have yet to recover from recession, study shows](#)

The Northwest Florida Daily News: [Study: Local wages expected to climb](#)

Albuquerque Business Journal: [Analysis: recession cost Albuquerque \\$1.5 billion in lost wages](#)

Bloomberg Businessweek: [Here Are the Parts of the U.S. With the Most Income Inequality](#)

Breitbart News: [US Wages Down 23% Since 2008](#)

CT Post: [Report: Income inequality on the rise](#)

Consumer Affairs: [For most consumers, today's economy is 1 step forward, 2 steps back](#)

Milwaukee – WTAQ: [Study: Few Midwestern metro areas have equal balance of personal incomes](#)

Orange County Register: [Editorial: More jobs available, many paying less](#)

Report: [Income inequality on the rise](#)

Sacramento Bee: [Sacramento mayor's income inequality task force meets in New York](#)

Star Tribune: [Report: Post-recession, jobs don't pay what they used to](#)

Think Progress: [The Jobs Added In Today's Economy Pay A Quarter Less Than The Ones We Lost In The Recession](#)

The Fiscal Time: [Job Crisis Persists As Wage Gap Threatens Economy](#)

The Daily Caller: [Liberal Mayors Slam Obama's Economy](#)

The Herald Tribune: [Jobs return; wages don't](#)

6.30 WPRO: [America's New Jobs Pay Less than the Old Ones](#)

Wage Gap Widens as Income Equality Grows

By Dave Gatton

Jobs gained during the economic recovery have a 23 percent smaller salary than those lost during the Great Recession, according to a new study released by The U.S. Conference of Mayors in New York City during the inaugural meeting of the its Cities Opportunities Task Force, August 11.

The average annual wage of lost jobs was \$61,637, but the salaries of jobs gained through the second quarter of 2014 equaled only \$47,171. This wage gap of 23 percent represents \$93 billion of lost wages during the current recovery and is significantly larger than the previous recession in 2001-2002, when the wage gap was 12 percent.

The gap resulted from extensive job losses in high-wage manufacturing and constructions sectors that were replaced during the recovery by strong job gains in lower wage sectors of hospitality, health care, and administrative support.

"While the economy is picking up steam, income inequality and wage gaps are an alarming trend that must be addressed," said Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. "This Task Force, led by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, will recommend both national and local policies that will help to give everyone opportunity. We cannot put our heads in the sand on these issues," he said.

The report documented the growing income inequality over the last forty

years. Since 1975, the highest-earning 20 percent of households saw their share of income rise from 43.6 percent to 51.0 percent in 2012. Most of this gain was among those in the highest 5 percent of income, which rose from 16.5 percent in 1975 to 22.3 percent in 2012, representing a gain of \$490 billion in 2012 alone.



Meanwhile, the lowest 20 percent of households saw their share of income fall from 4.3 percent in 1975 to 3.2 percent in 2012. In fact, the bottom 80 percent of households saw their share decline over the forty-year period.

According to the report, the lowest two quintiles, or 40 percent of households, received just 6.6 percent of all U.S. income gains since 2005.

The report forecasts that middle-income households will continue to fall

behind as higher income levels capture a greater share of income gains. In 2014 median household income is projected to increase by 2.5 percent in nominal dollars, and then by 3.8 percent per year from 2015 through 2017. But average [mean] income is expected to rise faster, 2.7 percent in 2014 and by 4.1 percent through 2017. Faster growth in mean income compared to median income demonstrates growing income inequality.

"The inequality crisis facing our cities is a threat to our fundamental American values," said Cities Opportunities Task Force Chair New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. "Reducing income inequality and ensuring opportunity for all is nothing less than the challenge of our times."

The report also shows that 261 (73 percent) metro areas have a higher share of poorer households, those making less than \$35,000 annually, than upper income households making over \$75,000.

In real, inflation adjusted terms, average household income fell 3.0 percent, while median income fell 5.5 percent from 2005-2012.

According to IHS economic models, the drift toward income inequality will persist in the coming years as it is a structural feature of the 21st Century economy. "Unless policies are developed to mitigate these trends, income inequality will only grow larger in the future," said Jim Diffley, Director of US Regional Economic at IHS.

A full copy of the report, "U.S. Metro Economies: Income and Wage Gaps Across the U.S." and its key findings can be found online at the website usmayors.org/metroeconomies.



For Those Who Answer the Call, a Promise of Better Treatment

By Sumter (SC) Mayor Joseph T. McElveen, Jr. and Rochester (MN) Mayor Ardeell Brede

A major scandal was rocking the nation's health care system for military veterans as mayors were preparing for this year's Annual Conference of Mayors in Dallas. Today, two months after our meeting, with new leadership for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and new legislation signed by President Obama on August 7, a seriously compromised VA system may be on the mend.

In April, it was widely reported that veterans seeking care at the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Phoenix may have experienced excessive delays in receiving care, that veterans may actually have died from lack of treatment due to the delays, and that officials at the facility misreported patient wait times in the system employed by all VA medical facilities. In fact, there had been similar reports of delayed care and other irregularities at other VA medical facilities over the years, including General Accountability Office findings that excessive waiting times and manipulation of the system to hide them in "secret lists" had occurred and continued to occur.

Responding to the daily headlines and the public outcry over these reports, Congress launched oversight hearings and the VA's inspector general investigated the Phoenix hospital and conducted audits of VA clinics nationwide. A report in May confirmed that hundreds of veterans seeking treatment at the Phoenix hospital were "at risk of being lost or forgotten," and that a number of veterans awaiting treatment had indeed died, although it was not possible to attribute all of the deaths to treatment delays. A report in June, based on audits of more than 700 VA medical centers and clinics, provided much more detail on the system-wide scheduling and service problems; it showed tens of thousands of veterans had waited at least three months for an initial appointment, and tens of thousands more had never gotten an appointment at all.

Both the House and Senate acted quick-

ly to address the VA's healthcare problems, passing similar bipartisan legislation that sought, among other things, to equip the VA to hire additional medical personnel and add new medical facilities, to allow veterans to obtain health care outside the VA system when necessary, and to ease restrictions on the VA's ability to dismiss incompetent personnel.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has a long history of working with the nation's defense community on a range of issues affecting our cities, and we believed the Dallas meeting offered an important opportunity for mayors concerned about the health and wellbeing of all their residents to speak out on the critical role played by the VA health system in cities throughout the nation – more than 1,700 hospitals, clinics, and other facilities serving 8.5 million patients – and the critical importance of restoring the system itself to health. We felt it was appropriate to propose a resolution for consideration in the Dallas meeting, a resolution that acknowledged the quick action taken by the Administration and Congress to identify the extent of the VA medical scheduling and service problems and to pursue legislation that would both require and enable the VA to address these problems.

The resolution also urged the Administration and Congress "to fully commit the resources that will be needed to implement all of the provisions of the VA health system legislation being finalized in Congress, and to equip the VA to ensure, in the years ahead, that all veterans receive the health care to which they are entitled, as needed and when needed."

We were pleased that this resolution was adopted by the Conference of Mayors in the Dallas meeting. And now, all mayors can applaud the final action taken by Congress: The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 provides funds – about \$16.3 billion – for additional health care providers and other clinical staff; enhances incentives to attract more doctors, nurses and other professionals to the VA; authorizes 27 major medical facility leases; funds emergency leases for added facilities; and allows veterans who have had to wait



more than 30 days for an appointment with the VA to seek care from private physicians, community health centers, and others.

The legislation includes provisions to address sexual trauma, to extend scholarships to surviving spouses of military personnel who die in the line of duty, to enable veterans to qualify for in-state tuition, and to provide housing for veterans struggling with traumatic brain injuries. It also authorizes the VA secretary to immediately remove incompetent senior executives based on poor job performance or misconduct, and provides an expedited appeals process to prevent political firings or other abuses of the new personnel power.

The fact that the new Veterans Act was passed before Congress adjourned for its August recess is a tribute to the extraordinary dedication and leadership of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, and his counterpart in the House, Florida Representative Jeff Miller. House passage of the bill on July 30 was nearly unanimous; the Senate vote the next day was 91-3. For a Congress that has earned low marks for its divisiveness and inability to advance needed legislation, this stands as a particularly impressive feat.

The VA moves forward now with new leadership, a renewed focus on its mission, and additional resources to close the gap between the healthcare our veterans need and the care they actually receive. Men and women who put themselves in harm's way in the service of this nation deserve nothing less.

Mayors McElveen and Brede are the Co-Chairs of the Conference of Mayors Veterans Affairs Task Force.

Calendar of Events

(Updated 08/13/14)

2014

August 28-29

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

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

- Community Policing: Oct 8-9
 - Ports/Exports and Imports: Oct 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 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 Opens Fall 2014

June 19-22

83rd Annual Conference of Mayors, San Francisco. Contact: Carol Edwards cedwards@usmayors.org / 202-293-7330; Sponsorship: Geri Powell gpowell@usmayors.org / 202-861-6774. Registration Opens Spring 2015

For updates or changes, check our web site at usmayors.org

RIGHTS

from page 3

meet community needs. The surrounding county, Dane County, has used a similar resolution as a springboard to create a Homeless Issues Committee, comprised of county supervisors, city Alders, the chief of police and community members, including homeless persons and services providers to specifically address criminalization of homeless populations. The human rights framework, which promotes dignity and well being for all, is a basis of these efforts. These initiatives also relate to growing city and state efforts to create "Homeless Bills of Rights."

Throughout our nation's history, local governments have served as incubators of innovation and change – addressing climate change and fostering sustainable economic development. In the arena of human rights, too, local governments must play a leading role. Cities would do well to promote policies that use human rights to counter discrimination, exchanging best practices and illustrating the utility of

a human rights-based approach through action. This means work at the institutional level to dismantle structures that lead to inequitable outcomes and proactively coping with historical circumstances that have led to disparities. Ongoing work in Eugene and countless other cities closely aligns with the Conference of Mayors Cities Against Racism and Discrimination initiative, in particular the 10-Point Plan of Action, which has been adopted by 120 mayors so far.

This month, the U.S. is being reviewed for compliance with the CERD, and Birmingham Mayor William Bell is scheduled to be present. This review offers another opportunity for mayors to showcase our proactive and innovative efforts to tackle discrimination and inequality on the world stage. It also offers a time for us to collectively reflect on how we can strengthen local policy through human rights.

Editor's Note: Piercy was one of the first mayors to join the U.S. Coalition of Cities against Racism and Discrimination and sign onto the Conference of Mayors 10-Point Plan of Action.

MAYORS BUSINESS COUNCIL

Member Profile

HOME AWAY

Home Away is the world's leading online marketplace for vacation home rentals.

Special Interests: City Livability, Economic Development, Economic Policy, Tourism Development

For more Business Council profiles visit the Conference of Mayors website at usmayors.org/buscouncil





Conference of Mayors Involved in State Income Tax Supreme Court Case

By State and Local Legal Center
Executive Director Lisa Soronen

In [Comptroller v. Wynne](#), the Supreme Court will determine whether the U.S. Constitution requires states to give a credit for taxes paid on income earned out-of-state.

Forty-three states and nearly 5,000 local governments tax residents' income. Many of these jurisdictions do not provide a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for income taxes paid to other states on income earned out-of-state. A decision against Maryland's Comptroller in this case will limit state and local government taxing authority nationwide.

The Wynnes of Howard County (MD) received S-corporation income that was generated and taxed in numerous states. Maryland's Tax Code includes a county tax. While Maryland law allowed the Wynnes to receive a tax credit against their Maryland state taxes for income

taxes paid to other states, it did not allow them to claim a credit against their Maryland county taxes.

Maryland's highest state court held that Maryland's failure to grant a credit against Maryland's county tax violated the U.S. Constitution's dormant Commerce Clause, which denies states the power to unjustifiably discriminate against or burden interstate commerce. Among other things, the Maryland Court of Appeals noted that if every state imposed a county tax without a credit, interstate commerce would be disadvantaged. Taxpayers who earn income out of state would be "systematically taxed at higher rates relative to taxpayers who earn income entirely within their home state."

The State and Local Legal Center (SLLC) / International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA) [amicus brief](#) challenges the Maryland Court of Appeals decision on several grounds. First, the power of state

and local governments to tax the income of its residents, wherever earned, has been upheld repeatedly at the Supreme Court. Second, the scope of the "dormant Commerce Clause" regarding individual non-resident income taxes has not been clearly defined by the Court and should not now construed to mandate credits. Third, taxation is a legislative matter that should not usurped by the judiciary.

And finally, state and local governments must make complex policy choices and tradeoffs when devising a taxing system. If Maryland was required to provide a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, a neighbor with substantial out-of-state income would contribute significantly less to pay for local services than a neighbor earning the same income in-state, even though both take equal advantage of local services. And to counterbalance a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, a county would need to raise some other tax, which will fall disproportionately on some other neighbor and often be more regressive. Maryland's choice to avoid these results "does not cross any constitutional line."

Paul Clement and Zack Tripp of Bancroft wrote the SLLC/IMLA brief. The National Conference of State Legislatures, National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, International City/County Management Association, and the Government Finance Officers Association joined the brief.





By Gregg Seller

A recent ruling by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has confirmed that the plan sponsor (employer) is responsible for monitoring fees charged to participant accounts under a defined contribution pension plan.

The latest ruling in *Tussey v. ABB* confirmed the position previously taken by the Department of Labor that the plan sponsor can be held financially liable for failing to monitor the fees (administrative and investment fees) paid by plan participants. This is an important issue for mayors of all cities, large and small.

Whether or not you, as the mayor, are personally active in the management of your defined contribution plan, it is important for you to be sure the individuals who do manage the plan are doing so in the "best interests of plan participants and their beneficiaries." Failure to do so could result in financial liability for the city and the "named fiduciaries" of the plan. Here are the key steps each mayor should take:

1 Appoint a Formal Committee, Commission, or Board to Manage Your Plan

Your plan should be managed by a formal committee, commission or board. In most cities, the city council and mayor appoint the members of the DC Committee by name and/or position. For example, the committee could include the Finance Director, HR Director, Treasurer and one or more other individuals appointed by the mayor or city council. In some cities, a member of a public employee union is also appointed to serve. Some cities appoint one or more "outside" experts from the community as well. The important thing is that there is a formal process for appointing the fiduciaries to manage the plan. Informal "ad hoc" management

Court Ruling Compels Mayors to Act

must be avoided, since there needs to be accountability for fiduciary responsibility. Decisions made by the committee (such as hiring and firing vendors) should be ratified by the city council.

Be certain the committee members do not have a conflict of interest. For example, if a committee member is affiliated with one or more of the potential bidders (due to association or union membership or endorsement of a vendor by their employee group or professional affiliation) then that individual must be ineligible to serve on the committee.

2 Establish a Public Bid Policy

Every mayor should be certain that their city has a formal policy or ordinance requiring that the vendors be put to formal bid at least every five years. Many cities (like Los Angeles, for example) have an ordinance stipulating how often a bid should be conducted. Other cities (like St. Louis) don't have a formal ordinance, but they have a "best practice" policy of conducting public bids on a regular basis. The important thing for your city is to be sure you have a policy or ordinance stipulating how often a public bid is required. Don't leave it to the discretion of staff or the committee. The only way to be certain the city is fulfilling its responsibility to plan participants is to conduct a full, complete public bid process on a regular schedule. Failure to do so exposes the city to the financial liability referenced in the court ruling noted above.

3 Decisions Should be Documented and Presented to the Mayor and City Council

Decisions on vendors or other key factors such as plan design should be documented in writing, and presented to the mayor and city council for ratification. The results of a formal bid process should be carefully documented so the city can demonstrate to plan participants that

every step was taken to ensure that participants and beneficiaries have the best program available regarding administrative fees, investment fees, investment options and plan services.

Since the city can be held financially liable for failing to manage the plan in the best interests of plan participants and their beneficiaries, it is important that the mayor and city council have oversight of procedures and decisions made by the committee. Failure to do so exposes the city and taxpayers to significant liability.

USCM Can Help

The Conference of Mayors has a partnership with Great-West Financial, the #1 provider of services to public sector deferred compensation plans. See how this partnership can offer significant improvements to your program by contacting Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland at kweyland@usmayors.org or 202-302-6944.

Gregory Seller

Gregory Seller Consulting, LLC

Gregg is an independent consultant specializing in public and private pension advocacy, plan architecture and design, and thought leadership for public pension policy. His practice is fostering debate on improving public and private pensions in the United States, and on the more efficient delivery of secure pension benefits to plan participants. For more information on this topic and related issues in public plan governance, go to the website: www.gregoryseller.com/articles

This article provided for information only and is not legal or investment advice. Plan sponsors should seek their own legal counsel on these and other matters regarding their fiduciary responsibility.



By Laura DeKoven Waxman

National Preparedness Month, America's PrepareAthon! Set for September

September is National Preparedness Month, a time during which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works with communities and organization to raise awareness about the importance of emergency preparedness. This year's National Preparedness Month theme is, "Be Disaster Aware, Take Action to Prepare." Communities everywhere are being encouraged to take action by participating in America's PrepareAthon! on or around September 30. America's PrepareAthon! is intended to take preparedness one step further by moving people from awareness to action.

National Preparedness Month

For more than a decade, FEMA's Ready Campaign has raised awareness about the importance of knowing the four building blocks of emergency preparedness: Be Informed, Make a Plan, Build a Kit, and Get Involved. Launched in February 2003, Ready is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the campaign is to get the public involved and ultimately

to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation. Information relating to National Preparedness Month is available at <http://www.ready.gov/september>.

FEMA has identified weekly themes for this year's National Preparedness Month:

Week 1 (September 1-7): How to... Reconnect with Family After a Disaster.

Week 2 (September 8-14): Know How to Plan for Specific Needs before a Disaster.

- Monday, 9/8: Youth and Children, and Colleges and Universities
- Tuesday, 9/9: Tribal Audiences
- Wednesday, 9/10: Business
- Thursday, 9/11: First Responders (Police, Fire, EMS, Nurses, and Public Utility etc.)
- Friday, 9/12: Organizations (Faith-based, voluntary and state/local/tribal)
- Saturday, 9/13: Disabilities, Access & Functional Needs and Older Americans
- Sunday, 9/14: Pets

Week 3 (September 15-21): How to... Build an Emergency Kit.

Week 4 and 5 (September 22-30): How to... Practice for an Emergency.

America's PrepareAthon!

America's PrepareAthon! is a grass-roots campaign for action intended to increase community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions and exercises. FEMA is encouraging mayors and other local leaders to coordinate a community-wide action event on September 30 for whatever hazard is most relevant. This could be an emergency drill or other preparedness activity.

Those communities that take preparedness actions and mention America's PrepareAthon! in their communications about the event, are asked to register at the campaign website so that their efforts will be recognized. This can be done at www.ready.gov/prepare.

America's PrepareAthon! has developed guidance for city officials, workplaces, houses of worship, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, K-12 schools, and community based organizations to do preparedness actions for earthquakes, winter storms, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and wildfires. Information tailored to each of these groups is available at www.ready.gov/prepare, as are free, downloadable, customizable posters, banner ads, and other promotional materials.

FEMA has posted a pre-recorded webinar that explains National Preparedness Month and America's PrepareAthon! at <https://icpd.adobeconnect.com/p9bdd8wrdxd/>. City officials can participate in the National Preparedness Month conversation by using #NatlPrep, follow America's PrepareAthon! on Twitter @PrepareAthon and participate in the conversation by using #PrepareAthon.

AMERICA'S
PrepareAthon!SM
BE SMART. TAKE PART. PREPARE.



By Laura DeKoven Waxman

White House Provides Latest Information on Border Kids Issue to Mayors, City Officials

White House, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security officials provided a briefing on the current situation relating to unaccompanied children and other migrants from Central America who have entered the country along the Southwest border in recent months in an August 12 conference call organized by the Conference of Mayors.

In introducing the call, Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran commented that this issue was discussed during Conference of Mayors annual meeting in Dallas in June, and that since then several mayors have called him seeking the latest information about the current situation relating to the border kids, inquiring primarily about what they can do to help. He thanked the White House for its assistance in organizing the call.

Among the information provided by White House Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Rohan Patel and Deputy Director of Public Engagement Julie Rodriguez in the initial briefing:

- The Administration has marshaled resources across all federal agencies to respond to this crisis.
- Migrants are no longer being housed in Homeland Security facilities for more than 72 hours.
- They are being turned over to HHS for custody or sent to live with sponsors or family members until their case is adjudicated.
- DoD has been able to close down the three temporary facilities it was using to house the migrants.
- HHS now has enough capacity to respond to the current situation.

- The number of people coming across the Southwest border has stabilized.
- The Education Department has just published a fact sheet on education services to immigrant children and those who have recently arrived in the U.S. that is intended to be helpful to local officials with the new school year about to begin. It may be viewed online at the website <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/unaccompanied-children.html>.

An area of need that was highlighted in the call was migrants' access to legal services. The mayors were asked to do what they could working with law schools, law firms, and legal services organizations to make sure that pro bono legal assistance was made available to the migrants.

Among issues raised by mayors who were on the call:

- Saint Louis Mayor Francis Slay reported that he is working with local charitable organizations and the Archdiocese and that his city has agreed to take up to 60 of the children who are in need of placement and have applied to the Office of Refugee Resettlement to do this. The ORR official on the call indicated that they were currently reviewing the many applications they have received and applicants should be hearing something in September.
- Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin commented how encouraging it is to hear city after city show leadership on this issue. He discussed how important comprehensive immigration reform,

which the Conference of Mayors has called for year after year, is to preventing problems like this from happening and to achieving income equality in this country. He urged the mayors on the call to support the White House's efforts relating to executive action in the meantime.

- Davenport Mayor Bill Gluba described his Caring Cities Campaign through which he has marshaled local organizations in welcoming and sponsoring migrants coming to his city and to others.

Other city officials on the call requested information about the numbers of people being placed in their communities and raised concern about the impact that reprogramming of funds away from other critical services, including refugee assistance, would have on programs in their cities. That reprogramming has been necessary because Congress has not acted on the \$4.3 billion supplemental appropriation requested by the President on July 8. The mayors on the call agreed that the Conference would circulate a mayoral sign-on letter calling on Congress to act quickly on the supplemental when it returns in September.

On the call to answer questions from HHS were Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs Principal Deputy Director Emily Barson and Office of Refugee Resettlement Associate Deputy Director Tricia Swartz. DHS Assistant Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs Phil McNamara was also on the call to respond to questions.



By Tom McClimon

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell travelled to four regions on August 5-9 to celebrate the positive economic impacts and successes of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as it approaches its 50th anniversary on September 3. As part of her travels, the Secretary went to two cities – Carmel (IN) and Phoenix – specifically to emphasize the fund's role in establishing city parks and refuges that connect city dwellers to the great outdoors.

"...the Land and Water Conservation Fund has made huge economic contributions to local communities in every state, helping to establish local parks, protect the clean water sources and create jobs through outdoor recreation. As we look to the next 50 years, we need to ensure that we continue this great legacy by fully and permanently funding this innovative program," stated Jewell at the beginning of her tour.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has long championed full funding of LWCF and reaffirmed its support in a resolution passed at the 82nd Annual Conference of Mayors this past June in Dallas. (The resolution is available on our website, usmayors.org).

Carmel

"This is not a partisan issue for which to take sides. This important federal funding resource was championed by Democrat Lyndon Johnson and we are grateful to him for it. We are also in debt to Republican Teddy Roosevelt, the 'Wilderness Warrior' who began our National Park System. Going back in history, caring for our precious resources has been a priority for great presidents of both parties, and I hope it always will be," stated

Interior Secretary Hits the Road to Support City Parks

Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard in welcoming Secretary Jewell.

During her visit, the Secretary was treated to a tour of Carmel that included Flowing Well Park, that was funded by LWCF, Coxhall Gardens and the Palladium.

Phoenix

"If you live in Phoenix, Arizona, utilizing our urban parks, that's part of life here," said Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton. "...the impact of this fund (LWCF) is seen all across the United States of America. It's been absolutely critical to establish urban parks and refuge, and helping to protect green spaces in urban areas across the country."

"There is an analysis done that says for every dollar invested through the Land



Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.



Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard and Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell.

and Water Conservation Fund, at least four dollars has been returned in terms of economic value to the community," stated Jewell in touring Encanto Park and South Mountain, which is the largest municipal park in the United States. The park received one of the fund's earliest grants back in 1966.



How Cooperative Purchasing Can Help Cites Save Valuable Time, Money

By Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland

It seems that mayors and cities across the U.S. are challenged with doing more with less. These are the days of cutbacks and limited resources yet expectations continue to rise. To help streamline the procurement process and cut costs, cities can turn to cooperative contracts as a resource. Participating in a cooperative purchasing program is an established best practice in public procurement. Cooperative purchasing consolidates the buying power of government agencies, schools and nonprofits nationally to provide benefits in pricing, product quality and contract efficiencies. Aggregating the purchasing power of these organizations can lower costs, increase services and save time.

There are a variety of regional and national cooperatives available, and as cities and mayors explore this purchasing option, there are many factors to consider beyond just product offerings. Most purchasing cooperatives offer cost and time savings, which are key to an effective procurement process.

Other factors to consider in your due diligence process include assessing the history and purchasing power of the cooperative. Beyond pricing, your city will need to evaluate the process in which the contract/supplier was solicited and awarded. To ensure compliance with state-specific guidelines, procurement officials should select a purchasing cooperative that adheres to a competitive bid solicitation process through a lead public agency. Cooperative purchasing programs that engage in this best practice will also offer transparency to taxpayers by providing access to documentation to confirm compliance. Additionally, agencies that implement stringent supplier commitments, audits, and price benchmarking will enable you to participate in the program with confidence.

The largest national cooperative, U.S.



Communities, is the only purchasing cooperative founded by public agencies, for public agencies. The five distinguished sponsors that cofounded and co-own U.S. Communities include: the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), and the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP). In addition, over 90 state associations show their support for U.S. Communities with sponsorship.

When it comes to cooperative procurement options, U.S. Communities delivers on key elements critical to the procurement process. U.S. Communities' supplier partners each commit to providing their most competitive government pricing to all participating agencies. Regularly scheduled internal and third-party audits ensure compliance with contract pricing, terms and conditions, while benchmarking analyses evaluate the overall value delivered. Supplier contracts are also reviewed quarterly by the Lead Public Agency, and all documents are publicly posted on the U.S. Communities website for complete transparency.

Since its founding in 1991, U.S. Communities has generated millions of dollars in savings for participating agencies. With more than 500 purchasing professionals joining each month, the continued rapid growth is a testament to the program's record of integrity and unparalleled value. There are no fees to participate and no purchasing minimums, allowing maximum flexibility for participating cities. As you assess the programs available to your city, be sure to include U.S. Communities on your list.

About U.S. Communities

U.S. Communities is the leading national government purchasing cooperative, providing solutions and savings to members by aggregating the purchasing power of public agencies nationwide. U.S. Communities provides members with access to a wide variety of competitively solicited contracts with national suppliers that have committed to providing their lowest overall public agency pricing.

For more information, contact Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland at kweyland@usmayors.org or 202-302-6944.

MAYORS BUSINESS COUNCIL

Member Profile

PEOPLE FOR BIKES BUSINESS NETWORK

The PeopleForBikes Business Network is the voice for every business across America that supports bicycling.

Every day, more companies nationwide are embracing bicycling as a way to attract talent, improve business and help their bottom line. The PeopleForBikes Business Network includes small businesses, large corporations and individual business leaders who value the economic benefits that come from investing in bike infrastructure.

Help us improve our communities through bicycling at PeopleforBikes.org.

Special Interests: Downtown Development, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Tourism Development, Transportation

For more Business Council profiles visit the Conference of Mayors website at usmayors.org/buscouncil

Best Practices

Healing Our Teens' Hearts

Monrovia's Journey to End Teen Suicides

By Monrovia Mayor Mary Ann Lutz

We all know about these calls; you hang up the phone with a pit in your stomach. How could this be happening again? It was summer, 2012 and the devastating news that once again, a teen from our city ended their life by their own hands. Monrovia is often times referred to as "Mayberry-like." We are tight knit community of 37,000 residents, fifteen miles northeast of Los Angeles, nestled at the feet of the beautiful San Gabriel Mountains. It was simply not possible that we have had four teen suicides in less than two years! Indicators showed that our city percentage of teen suicide (ages 15-19) exceeded national and county rates. To highlight the problem more clearly, we realized that these suicides had occurred in the summer months.

The wellness of our community, and in particular our youth, was in crisis. My first communication was with our school superintendent who agreed we needed to make a call to action to bring together school district psychologists, members of our faith community, mental health professionals, parents and, most importantly, students. The group was named "Healing Connections" and our goal was simple: reduce/eliminate teen suicides in Monrovia.

We began with a school-wide survey to determine areas of social emotional needs. Outreach programs for our middle and high schools were created. Our plan was to create opportunities to engage the youth during the school year but also during the important summer months.

Healing connections, an all-volunteer committee, has successfully implemented these programs over the past two years:

1) "You're Worth It" cards, developed and designed by a high school student, were

given to all students with information on suicide prevention and teen life lines.

- 2) An annual, month-long, citywide program, called "March 4 Balance," was established to reduce the mental health stigma and increase focus on mental health needs through a campaign to educate our community by reaching out to students, parents, business leaders, community service clubs, and churches. In an effort to engage the community short video was used to focus the discussion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEWQb8lkG-E&feature=em-share_video_user
- 3) Church and City Youth Commissions established or enhance programs, where student leaders, including school club presidents from the Bullying Club, Gay Straight Alliance and others, spoke at youth groups and churches regarding mental health awareness.
- 4) In-reach programs were held at lunch at all secondary schools, where community agencies set up tables to display information regarding services to increase students' knowledge of activities in the community and access mental health and suicide prevention services. The community agencies engaged students through games and prizes.
- 5) Annual assemblies to bring awareness to suicide markers, prevention and contact information for teen hotlines so students will know who to tell when they are concerned about a friend who might be suicidal were held at all middle and high school.
- 6) Brochures, pamphlets and telephone messaging were sent to parents from Healing Connections, and all publications, written and online, were produced in English and Spanish.
- 7) A weekly summer teen night event was created partnering the city, local YMCA, faith groups and volunteers on Friday nights in the park during the summer where teens could gather to engage the youth in music, art, recreation and leadership activities.



Monrovia Mayor Mary Ann Lutz

- 8) Churches, YMCA, the community center, and schools hosted parent information events, making parents more aware of teens' mental health needs.
- 9) Technology and social media links, like Facebook, Twitter and others, were created in order for students to connect, identify and obtain help if there was a need. Healing Connections youth monitored the sites and reached out to adults when needed.

The outcomes – two years without a successful teen suicide in our city, a reduction in incidences of attempted suicides, reduction in emergency calls, increase of students asking for help for themselves and others, and an increase in student participation in school campus and community activities.

This an ongoing sustainable program that is innovative because there is full collaboration and support with the city, school district, ministerial association, mental health agencies and most importantly our youth, toward a common concern for the health of our city.

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

