Johnson Appoints Gary Mayor Freeman-Wilson to Lead Special Mayors-Police Chiefs Working Group

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson November 20 appointed Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson to chair a working group of mayors and police chiefs charged with developing policy recommendations in response to the aftermath of the police-involved shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson (MO). Lessons that can be learned from Ferguson were discussed during the Conference of Mayors community policing meeting held in Little Rock October 8-9, and Johnson pledged at that meeting to establish the working group. The working group will meet several times in December and early January by

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Mayors’ Hunger and Homelessness Report: Increased Demand Found for Emergency Services, Shortfall in Resources

U.S. Conference of Mayors Releases 25-City Survey

The 32nd annual assessment of hunger and homelessness, conducted by The U.S. Conference of Mayors released on December 11, found increased demand this year for emergency food and housing across 25 cities whose mayors are members of the Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Home-
Washington (DC) December 12, 2014

On November 9, The U.S. Conference of Mayors was present in Berlin for the 25th anniversary of the falling of the Berlin Wall.

We were invited by the German Government to attend a very special session on November 9 with Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

It was appropriate for us to be there since our organization has been closely aligned with the reunification of East and West Berlin. President Kennedy asked mayors to go to meet with Mayor Willy Brandt to stand against the building of the Berlin Wall and we did. Later Mayor Brandt came to us and we welcomed him to the United States.

Three weeks before the wall went down in 1989 and after an invitation from the German Republic, I took another delegation to support those who advocated for a united Berlin.

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard led the mission, along with Mayors Kautz of Burnsville, Barnett of Rochester Hills and Plusquellic of Akron. Mayor Ballard’s mission was to inquire as to how city governments operated before the wall went up and after it came down. Mayor Ballard, being a Cold War soldier for over 20 years in the United States Marine Corps stationed in Germany during the very tense situation, gave us a clear perspective. He led discussions inquiring as to how the soldiers responding to being a part of the Soviet bloc forces and then almost overnight having a different independent nation to protect.

And we had mayor-to-mayor discussions in the cities of Prague and Budapest on the question of how cities are faring economically and socially since the Berlin Wall came down.

In Berlin, we also met with Lech Walesa, President of Poland from 1990 to 1995, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and founder of Solidarity, who led the Polish revolution and influenced the flourishing of democracies 25 years ago. Mayors also had informal discussions with former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who worked with President Reagan and courageously took the necessary steps to transform the Soviet Union into the many nations we have now.

Mr. Gorbachev spoke to the press as we were with him warning us that we have a new Cold War today due to recent power moves by Vladimir Putin against Ukraine.

There is, too, an uneasiness in Prague and Budapest concerning the Russian action against Ukraine. City officials in both cities are affected because they have Czechs and Hungarians who live in Ukraine and their constituents want to be certain they are safe. Both the Czech Republic and Hungary have been the victims of power grabs of neighboring countries. And citizens are taking notice of recent developments and some are quite concerned.

Public Safety

Following the tragic event in Ferguson on August 9, mayors assembled in Little Rock on October 8, as reported earlier, to commemorate the founding of the COPS Program and meet with President Clinton and Attorney General Holder.

From Little Rock, Conference of Mayors President Kevin Johnson appointed a working group to be headed up by Gary Indiana Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson.

Mayor Johnson charged the working group of mayors and police chiefs to meet in December and early January for the purpose of developing a set of recommendations to help correct aspects of issues that have unfolded since the fatal shooting in Ferguson. Now, the working group will have as its charge to also respond to the non-indictment in New York. Their work will be presented to the Conference of Mayors Leadership when

See COCHRAN on page 3
the mayors assemble in DC for our 83rd Winter Meeting in January.

The protests continue and no doubt are not going away. Conference President Johnson held a leadership call last Friday for the purpose of allowing mayors to share best practices and learn from each other as to how the protests are somewhat different in each city and require, at times, different responses. The response to President Johnson’s call was most substantive and enthusiastic.

Looming over the public safety also is the question of jobs, mentoring, the ongoing concern about youth violence, the training of police officers, newer and smarter equipment and other priority issues.

President Obama announced, on December 1 in a meeting with mayors and law-enforcement officials in The White House, that he is appointing a new Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing in response to Ferguson and New York.

No doubt our working group will be working closely with the President’s task force as we head to our January Winter Meeting for continuing our work on the public safety recommendations.

We appreciate our President, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, for focusing on this issue as the police officers are our employees and in our country, the nation’s mayors are responsible for the safety of all who live in cities.

USCM Winter Meeting - January 21 to 23, Washington (DC)

Conference President Johnson is working with us to bring you a substantive, meaningful and productive 2015 Winter Meeting. Stay tuned for more information on the great meeting we shall have.

From all the Conference Staff at your national headquarters here in Washington, We wish you Merry Christmas - Happy Holidays - and Happy New Year!

We look forward to working with you in the coming year and we are most appreciative of your participation and the time you give to make our great organization even greater.

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Mayor Cornett Urges Immediate Passage of Marketplace Fairness Bill

By Larry Jones

U.S. Conference of Mayors Second Vice President Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett told a large gathering of press and congressional staff during a December 4 press conference at the U.S. Capitol that the House should pass the Marketplace Fairness Act immediately. Doing so will level the playing field between local merchants and remote Internet retailers by closing a tax loophole under existing law that requires local merchants with physical presence to collect state and local sales taxes but not Internet retailers with no physical presence.

Cornett pointed out that the sales tax is vital to state and local governments, and the loss of these revenues will have a direct impact on the quality of life. He explained that half of Oklahoma City’s revenues come from the sales tax. Under current law, he said, “This tax loophole is causing the city to lose an estimated $10 million to $15 million a year. It is affecting both the quality and quantity of services we provide. For $10 million, we could hire 100 additional police officers. Just think about the multiple effects this is having in cities across the nation.”

Passage of the legislation is needed not only to level the playing field but also to stop the erosion of sales tax revenues. As more purchases are made from Internet retailers, state and local governments are losing sales tax revenues at an alarmingly high rate. According to recent estimates, state and local governments are losing $26 billion annually due to taxes that go uncollected on remote sales.

Cornett was joined at the event by other elected leaders from all levels of governments – federal, state and local – and representatives from the business community. Other mayors attending included Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, who serves as President of the National League of Cities; Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard; and Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton. Commenting on the diverse groups represented at the event, Cornett said, “This just demonstrates how much the bill enjoys broad support from both government and business leaders everywhere.”

Although some have claimed the bill would create a new tax on Internet retailers, Cornett and others made clear that nothing could be further from the truth. Sponsors of the legislation, Senator Mike Enzi (WY) and Representative Steve Womack (AR), who also spoke at the event, explained that instead of imposing a new tax, the bill will merely provide state and local governments a mechanism for collecting taxes that are already due.

States that have sales tax laws require local merchant to collect their taxes. They also have use tax laws that require residents to pay taxes on goods purchased from remote Internet retailers. However, a 1992 Supreme Court decision prevents state and local governments from forcing remote sellers to collect their taxes. And while most state laws require residents to submit taxes on remote sales when they file their state income taxes, most do not because they are either unaware or unwilling to report these purchases. Evidence suggests that unless remote sellers are required to collect, it is unlikely state and local governments will ever receive these taxes.

Under the Marketplace Fairness Act, collecting taxes on remote sales will strictly be a state decision. Each state will be able to decide on its own whether or not to collect these taxes. Those that decide to collect must first approve legislation adopting certain simplification standards that will make it easy for remote sellers to collect these taxes. Once the simplification process is certified, states will be given authority to require Internet retailers and other remote sellers to collect their taxes.

Although proponents of the bill made a push to get the House to take action on the Marketplace Fairness Act before Congress adjourns, House Speaker John Boehner (OH) said he would not deal...
Toledo Mayor Collins Calls for Further Research to Prevent Water Shutdowns

By Paul Leroux

Toledo Mayor D. Michael Collins was in Washington earlier this month to testify before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry following a harmful algal bloom in his city’s water supply.

Collins reported that, on the weekend of August 2, the public water system in and around Toledo issued a “Do not consume” order to nearly 400,000 customers, which lasted for approximately 72 hours. Testing showed that it would have been dangerous to eat or drink any food or beverage that was contaminated by the microcystin toxin that was the direct result of algal blooms in Lake Erie.

According to Collins, though people in the community were extremely calm and cooperative as he worked to import water from outside Toledo, the economic damage of the water shutoff was fairly large, well over $2 million. Collins called for federal action to prevent this from happening again.

“Toxic algal blooms are not new,” Collins said. “We have as a nation failed in studying the reasons why they continue and in taking steps to reduce or eliminate their occurrence.” Specifically, Collins urged the Committee to provide additional research funding, set federal water quality standards for toxic algal blooms, and prioritize funding for infrastructure and conservation in the Lake Erie watersheds.

The Committee’s Chair, Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, welcomed Collins and his testimony, as did Collins’s own senator, Sherrod Brown of Ohio. Brown remarked that the events in August were, “A tragedy that we should never allow to happen in a country this rich.”

“ Toxic algal blooms are not new. We have as a nation failed in studying the reasons why they continue and in taking steps to reduce or eliminate their occurrence.”

– Toledo Mayor D. Michael Collins

MARKETPLACE

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Extension of Internet Tax Freedom Act

On a related issue, Congress is discussing including language in the omnibus spending bill that will extend the Internet Tax Freedom Act from December 12 of this year to September 30, 2015. The temporary extension is a victory for the Conference of Mayors and other state and local groups that oppose a measure (H.R. 3086) approved by the House last June calling for a permanent ban on state and local taxes on Internet access fees.

The groups oppose the permanent ban because it would preempt state and local taxing authority; eliminate a grandfather clause under existing law that allows seven states and their local governments (that passed laws imposing taxes on Internet access fees before the 1998 federal law was enacted) to continue collecting an estimated $500 million annually from taxes on Internet access fees; and expand the scope of services that the law shields from state and local taxes.
Conference of Mayors President Johnson Responds to Grand Jury Decisions, Convenes Conference Leadership

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Following the November 24 announcement by St. Louis County Prosecutor Robert McCulloch that the grand jury would not indict the Ferguson police officer who fatally shot Michael Brown August 9, Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson issued a statement on behalf of the nation’s mayors expressing concern that there would not be open-court proceedings “so that the evidence could have been presented in a public forum, and a verdict could have been rendered by a jury.”

Johnson called on the prosecutor to release a full transcript and audio proceedings of the grand jury’s proceedings so that “the Brown family and the American public will have a greater understanding of what happened on August 9.” The prosecutor is continuing to release some if not all of these documents.

Johnson expressed his condolences again to Michael Brown’s family and to the entire Ferguson community, which, he said, “...has endured the consequences of this event and its aftermath.” He acknowledged the “understandable feeling of discontent in the community,” and urged that any protests be peaceful and nonviolent.

Just nine days later on December 3, Johnson again spoke out on behalf of the mayors, this time in response to that day’s decision by a Staten Island Grand Jury not to indict a New York City police officer in connection with the death of Eric Garner from a chokehold. Johnson extended the mayors’ sympathies and prayers to the Garner family and said that “mayors know better than anyone that the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown are not isolated incidents,” and that similar tragedies have taken place in small and large cities, north, south, east and west for decades.

“This is our chance to make this right,” Johnson continued. “As the leaders of the nation’s cities, we are committed to working with leaders in Washington and across the nation to bring communities together to deal with the greater issues of race and poverty, and the growing economic and cultural divide we see in some of our neighborhoods today.”

Johnson urged that any protests be peaceful and called for a continued national dialogue. He said that for America to remain “the world’s greatest democracy...we must respect our laws and the rights of all Americans.”

Leadership Call

Just two days later on December 5, Johnson convened a call of Conference of Mayors leaders to discuss the situations in Ferguson, New York and other cities as a result of the decisions and to give mayors an opportunity to share with one another how they were working with their police departments and engaging community residents. Conference of Mayors Vice President Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake reported that telephone town halls provide a quick and easy way for residents to participate in a discussion. Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson described how study circles can bring people together around different issues. Johnson announced during the call that Freeman-Wilson was chairing a working group of mayors and police chiefs charged with developing policy recommendations based on lessons learned from the events that have occurred in Ferguson and other cities around the nation. (See story on page 1)

Several mayors, including Philadelphia’s Michael Nutter, a Conference of Mayors Past President, described their efforts to work with the protestors to make sure their concerns are heard and their demonstrations are peaceful. Others talked about training they’re providing to police officers, including Birmingham Mayor William Bell, who offered to share with other cities training programs for both new officers and existing officers which they have developed with the Civil Rights Institute. Bell and Akron Mayor Don Plusquellec discussed the importance of independent investigations of police-involved shootings and other such incidents when they occur. Columbia Mayor Stephen Benjamin discussed a number of efforts underway to improve police department practices, including those relating to the hiring and training of officers.

President Obama Announces Initiatives to Strengthen Community Policing

President Barack Obama announced several initiatives on December 1 to strengthen community policing.

He established a Task Force on 21st Century Policing, co-chaired by Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey, a member of the Conference’s working group, and Laurie Robinson, professor at George Mason University and former Assistant Attorney General for DOJ’s Office of Justice Programs. Members are being appointed and the Task Force will be working with COPS Office Director Ron Davis to develop a report to the President with recommendations to improve policing by the end of April.

The President also proposed a three-year $263 million funding package to increase use of body-worn cameras, expand training for law enforcement agencies, add more resources for police department reform, and multiply the number of cities in which the Justice Department can facilitate community/police department engagement. It’s expected that the new Body Worn Camera Partnership Program would provide a 50 percent match to departments that purchase body worn cameras and requisite storage. The President is requesting $75 million over

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conference call and then during the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in Washington January 21-23. There, it will present its recommendations to the Conference of Mayors Task Force of Mayors and Police Chiefs and then to the Conference of Mayors Criminal Justice Committee.

Mayors appointed to the working group, all of whom participated in the Little Rock meeting, are Shane Bemis of Gresham, Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, Michael Nutter of Philadelphia, Annise Parker of Houston, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, Francis Slay of St. Louis, and Mark Stodola of Little Rock.

Police chiefs in the working group, all of whom also participated in the Little Rock meeting, are Commissioner Anthony Batts of Baltimore, Chief Kenton Buckner of Little Rock, Chief Chris Burbank of Salt Lake City, Executive Assistant Chief and Chief of Staff Martha Montalvo of Houston, Commissioner Charles Ramsey of Philadelphia, Chief Sam Somers of Sacramento, and Chief Yost Zakhary of Woodway (TX).

Conference of Mayors staff has pulled together issue areas for possible consideration by the working group based on the discussions in Little Rock and that occurred during the Sacramento Leadership Meeting in September. Among those issue areas are:

- Providing transparent, honest, accurate, and timely communications to the public and the media;
- Assuring mayor/police chief coordination and communication around an incident;
- Building and maintain trust between the police and the communities they serve;
- Practicing constitutional policing;
- Improving police officer recruitment and training; and
- Addressing racial and economic disparities and community frustration with and distrust of the police and institutions of government.

Freeman-Wilson, the first African-American woman mayor in Indiana, brings extensive experience in both civil rights and criminal justice to the task. She has served as the Attorney General of the State of Indiana, as Director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, and as presiding judge of the Gary City Court. She also has been the CEO of The National Association of Drug Court Professionals and Executive Director of The National Drug Court Institute. At the Conference of Mayors, she is Vice Chair of the Criminal and Social Justice Committee.

Finally, the President released the White House review of federal funding and programs that provide equipment to state and local law enforcement agencies. That report provides details on programs across multiple federal agencies that support law enforcement acquisition of equipment.

The report found a lack of consistency in how federal programs are structured, implemented and audited, and identifies four areas for further examination to better ensure the appropriate use of federal programs to maximize the safety and security of police officers and the communities they serve: 1) Local Community Engagement, 2) Federal Coordination and Oversight, 3) Training Requirements, and 4) The Community Policing Model. The President directed relevant federal agencies to work together and with law enforcement and civil rights and civil liberties organizations to develop specific recommendations within 120 days. A website link to the report is available at www.whitehouse.gov/community-policing.
lessness. Low wages led the list of causes of hunger cited by officials in the cities surveyed, and lack of affordable housing was seen as the chief cause of homelessness for both families with children and unaccompanied individuals.

The report was released in a telephone press conference by Hunger and Homelessness Task Force Co-chair Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider. The mayor was joined on the call by Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran, and by U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Senior Policy Director Richard Cho.

“Again this year, despite the economic progress the nation as a whole is making, we anticipated that problems related to joblessness and other lingering effects of the recession would be reflected in the reports coming in from the survey cities – and they were,” said Schneider. “We have seen some extraordinary efforts by cities, private agencies, foundations, charities, and volunteers to cope with hunger and homelessness. But despite all efforts, the problems remain, as do our concerns about the future.”

“It’s been more than three decades, and every report on these problems that we have published has reiterated a need for more services and more capacity to help growing numbers of families and individuals in need,” said Cochran. “This year is no different,” he said. “There’s no question that the nation’s economy is on the mend. But there’s also no question that the slow pace of the recovery in past years has made it difficult – and, for many of our cities, impossible – to respond to the growing needs of hungry and homeless Americans.”

**Findings on Hunger**

Seventy-one percent of the cities in this year’s survey reported that requests for emergency food assistance increased over the past year. Across all the survey cities, the requests increased by an average of seven percent. Of those requesting assistance, 56 percent were persons in families, 38 percent were employed, 20.5 percent were elderly, and seven percent were homeless. Low wages led the list of causes cited by the survey cities, followed by poverty, unemployment, and high housing costs.

The cities reported a nine percent average increase in the number of pounds of food distributed this year compared to last, and more money was spent on food this year, with budgets for emergency food purchases increasing by 5 percent. As a group, the survey cities’ emergency food budget totaled $624 million. But the additional food purchased and distributed was not enough: Demand for emergency food assistance went unmet in 27 percent of the survey cities.

In 82 percent of the responding cities, emergency kitchens and food pantries had to reduce the quantity of food persons could receive at each food pantry visit or the amount of food offered per-
meal at emergency kitchens. In 77 percent of the cities, they had to reduce the number of times a person or family could visit a food pantry each month. Also, in 77 percent of the cities, facilities had to turn away people because of lack of resources.

Findings on Homelessness

Overall, the total number of homeless persons increased across the survey cities by one percent. The number of families experiencing homelessness increased by an average of three percent, with 43 percent of the cities reporting an increase and 22 percent saying the number stayed the same as in the previous year. The number of unaccompanied individuals experiencing homelessness over the past year decreased by an average of just under 1 percent, with 35 percent of the cities reporting an increase, 26 percent saying the number stayed the same, and 39 percent reporting a decrease.

Across the survey cities as a group, 28 percent of homeless adults were severely mentally ill, 22 percent were physically disabled, 15 percent were victims of domestic violence, and three percent were HIV Positive. Eighteen percent of homeless adults were employed and 13 percent were veterans.

For families with children, the single leading cause of homelessness cited by city officials was lack of affordable housing, followed by unemployment, poverty, and low-paying jobs. For unaccompanied individuals, lack of affordable housing also topped the list of causes of homelessness, followed by unemployment, poverty, mental illness and lack of needed services, and substance abuse and lack of needed services.

Across the survey cities, an average of 22 percent of the demand for emergency shelter went unmet. Because no beds were available, emergency shelters in 73 percent of the survey cities had to turn away homeless families with children. Shelters in 61 percent of the cities had to turn away unaccompanied individuals.

The Veterans Administration and Department of Housing and Urban Development continued this year to target funds to homeless veterans, and 91 percent of the survey cities reported that their use of these funds has reduced the homeless veterans population. Nearly all of the cities, however, said more affordable housing was required to address veterans’ current unmet needs.

Outlook

Most survey cities expect that demand for emergency food will increase in the year ahead. Eighty-four percent of the survey cities expect this, and two of the cities in this group expect the increase will be substantial. No city expects to see a decrease in requests. Making matters worse in 44 percent of the cities is the expectation that there will be even fewer resources to provide emergency food assistance in the year ahead, and two of the cities in this group expect the decrease in resources will be substantial. Four of the cities are more optimistic and expect moderate increases in their emergency food resources.

Officials in 39 percent of the cities expect a moderate increase in the number of homeless families next year; those in 30 percent expect the number to continue at about the same level. In another 30 percent of the cities, a moderate decrease in homeless families is anticipated. The population of homeless unaccompanied individuals is expected to decrease moderately next year in 43 percent of the cities, and a moderate increase is expected in 30 percent of the cities.

In 68 percent of the cities, resources to provide emergency shelter are expected to stay at about the same level as this year, but officials in 27 percent of the cities are expecting a decrease in resources. In two of these cities, this decrease is expected to be substantial.

“It is important to understand that the face of hunger and homelessness has changed as the national economy has contracted. In the city of Santa Barbara, like many other cities large and small around the country, there are many people who were never vulnerable in the past, but who find themselves vulnerable now,” Schneider said. “Mayors in cities across the country are doing all they can to provide the resources for those in need, but the number of people looking for food assistance seems to be growing. We are very concerned about what could happen to our emergency food and shelter programs next year, and in the years beyond, if federal budgeting makes it harder, not easier, to meet our responsibilities to all of our people. But until our economy improves for all Americans, programs to combat poverty, hunger, and homelessness need to be protected – not compromised, not sacrificed – by our Congress.”

A copy of the survey report, which contains findings, individual city profiles, and detailed descriptions of dozens of programs that the survey cities have undertaken to combat hunger and homelessness, can be downloaded from the Conference of Mayors website at www.usmayors.org. An audio file of the press conference call is available on this site on December 12.

The 25 survey cities, whose mayors are members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness, are: Asheville (NC), Boston, Charleston, Charlotte (NC), Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Des Moines, Los Angeles, Louisville, Memphis, Nashville, Norfolk (VA), Philadelphia, Phoenix, Plano (TX), Providence, Saint Paul (MN), Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Trenton, and Washington (DC).
Mayors Commend New EPA Water Affordability Framework as Positive Step Forward

By Judy Sheahan

Mayors met with senior officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) December 4, in conjunction with the Mayors Water Council Meeting, to discuss EPA’s newly released “Financial Capability Assessment Framework for Municipal Clean Water Act Requirements.” The framework, which was released November 24, was the result of nearly two years of discussions with representatives of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities (NLC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo).

The mayors originally asked for these discussions due to the growing concern that costly water and wastewater mandates were dramatically impacting low and fixed income residents and said the framework was “a good first step in bringing national water quality goals and local resource constraints in better balance.” The purpose of the meeting was to determine what next steps were needed to move forward in implementing both the framework and Integrated Planning.

Two years ago, EPA, after much discussion with the Conference of Mayors, launched Integrated Planning, which allows a local government to create comprehensive plans on how they will implement their Clean Water Act obligations. This would ideally give local governments more flexibility to address their more pressing clean water issues first. However, the question remained regarding what a city, and more importantly its citizens, could afford. As a result, the affordability dialogue was launched which led to the recently released affordability framework.

The framework “identifies the key elements EPA uses in working with permittees to evaluate how their financial capability should influence schedules…and provides examples of additional information that may help some communities provide a ‘more accurate and complete picture’ of their financial capability.”

EPA still identifies median household income (MHI) as one of the factors used to determine what is “affordable.” Mayors have demonstrated that the policy unfairly burdens poor and moderate income residents. However, in the new document, EPA added examples of six other types of residential impacts and eleven financial strength impacts that could be considered in addition to MHI. EPA stressed that they consider the framework a “living document” subject to modification, and other factors could be considered as well.

The mayors participating at the meeting included Mayors Water Council Co-Chair, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, Conference of Mayors Past President Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, Lima Mayor Dave Berger, Hallandale Beach Mayor Joy Cooper, Rockville (MD) Mayor Bridget Newton, Hempstead Mayor Wayne Hall, Sr., and Jackson Mayor Tony Yarber. Other mayors that sent staff included Baltimore and New York City.

EPA was represented by Assistant Administrator for the Office of Enforcement Cynthia Giles, Acting Assistant Administrator for Water Ken Kopocius, and Regional Administrators Curt Spalding of Region 1, Shawn Garvin of Region 3, and Susan Headman of Region 5.

Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran said, “We appreciate EPA engaging local governments in this critical discussion of how to meet water and wastewater goals without placing an undue burden on the poor. To be successful, we need to reestablish the federal-local government partnership if we are to move forward on improving public health and the environment but to do so in a cost effective manner.”

Implementing the new policy in the field is the next challenge, and the Conference of Mayors, NACO, and NLC all committed to working with the agency to accomplish this. Key concerns include EPA’s hesitation to fully embrace consideration of all public water costs to the full extent the three associations had hoped for. Safe Drinking Water Act requirements are an equally essential consideration that must be included in evaluating financial capability. The groups expressed confidence in EPA’s desire to improve this process over time. At the meeting, the mayors and EPA discussed the importance of educating city, states, and EPA Regional staff on how Integrated Planning and the framework can be implemented.

To review EPA’s affordability framework, visit the website: http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/cso/upload/municipal_fca_framework.pdf
Mayors Water Summit Engages EPA on Integrated Planning, Treasury on Public Water Infrastructure Tax Incentives

By Rich Anderson

The Conference of Mayors Water Council (MWC) convened the 2014 Mayors Water Summit in Washington (DC) December 4-5. Conference of Mayors Vice President Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Indianapolis (IN) Mayor Greg Ballard Co-chaired the meeting where mayors, city water staff and the MWC Water Development Advisory Board (WDAB) members consulted on issues described below that directly affect the delivery of local water services and infrastructure management.

Progress on Integrated Planning, Customer Affordability

The decades-long awaited consent decree in Lima (OH) has been completed with an anticipated effective date December 26. The Integrated Planning (IP) framework was applied, and Mayor David Berger stated, “It will be of interest to most cities, particularly regarding the language on reopeners, prioritization and a variety of flexibilities that we think are really important to long term solutions.” Berger credited EPA’s Washington headquarters staff for helping the negotiators breakthrough differences to complete the consent agreement.

Fred Andes, of Barnes and Thornburg, represented Lima, and is largely responsible for crafting several elements of the consent decree that protects the city from uncertainties. He said that the schedule for compliance is effectively 26-28 years, and focus investments in the early years on combined sewer overflow (CSO) reductions as a priority. A critical provision is a reopener. It basically says Lima will make certain investments in a certain order over time, but if the economy changes for the worse the levels of compliance and time frame can be revisited.

Akron Mayor Donald Plusquellic expressed frustration in dealing with EPA’s regional office that has resisted the city’s planned improvement to the long-term control plan. Akron submitted an IP application but was asked by the regional EPA about what additional clean water requirements the city was taking on. Plusquellic stated that the cost of the plan to comply is over $1.4 billion.

Michael Musgrave, with MWH Global, outlined the IP platform strategy of investment with three components: optimize long term plan with new technology and smart engineering; do an affordability analysis; and, engage meaningful stakeholder involvement throughout the process. Both Musgrave and Plusquellic stated that the city has had to gain more knowledge of the stormwater and discharges than the EPA, and this helps the city challenge compliance based on models instead of monitoring information.

Green Infrastructure

Jackson Mayor Tony Yarber led a discussion on how to use Integrated Planning (IP) to maximize benefits from public water investments. Yarber said that Jackson is under a consent decree on stormwater and overflows. The city took the approach that Green Infrastructure (GI) should be incorporated in a way that solves the stormwater problem and adds open space, recreational areas and aesthetic community centers. The mayor stated that this is a challenge in Mississippi because of the prevalence of clay soils with low permeability characteristics.

Michael Matichich, of CH2M HILL, made remarks about his work with cities

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around the nation to help find financing for the GI components of city stormwater management. He presented several examples of financing mechanisms used by cities like Syracuse (NY). EPA Green Infrastructure Coordinator Chris Kloss also commented on the growth in GI financing and the growing acceptance and incorporation into water stewardship. Kloss described several joint federal agency efforts to coordinate for intelligent water quality management.

Water Infrastructure Finance, Tax Policy, Private Investment

Benjamin R. Levine spoke on behalf of the Department of the Treasury Office of State and Local Finance, informing mayors on the mission of the office, and to send a clear welcome as one of the “touch points” for cities at treasury. “We can be that office where you come to for information and either we will provide it or find the right office for you to go to,” said Levine.

The Office of State and Local Finance is currently engaged in five to six policy areas of focus; not as a regulator or for tax policy, but as a critical information source for the Administration about several areas of the municipal market: pension and retirement obligations; state budgeting, tax and fiscal issues; infrastructure investment. Levine commented that his office has been reviewing innovative infrastructure approaches pursuant to an Executive Action taken last summer: (1) elevate an office in DOT looking at innovative program delivery; (2) convened an Inter-Agency working group, chaired by the Secretary of Transportation and Treasury, includes all agencies dealing with infrastructure, generated a set of recommendations that the President is currently reviewing.

American Water CFO Linda Sullivan commented that American Water’s annual investments in water infrastructure and services exceed a billion dollars. She said the private water industry has the expertise and the capital to play a bigger role but federal impediments, such as the requirement that public water systems under private operation must meet certain IRS private use tests or the public entity is required to defease existing tax-exempt bonds. Sullivan suggested several ways that Treasury could modify this policy to encourage private involvement, but also to provide a federal incentive to invest more in public water.

Levine noted that the IRS has issued a Bulletin (Internal Revenue bulletin: 2014-46, November 10, 2014, Notice 2014-67: Private business use of tax exempt bond financed facilities) that is open to public comment. Commentators Michael Deane, NAWC, and Eric Petersen, of Hawkins Delafield & Wood, agreed that private use for a public purpose is reasonable justification to allow cities to hold the bonds rather than trigger a remedial action, and provides a financial incentive to upgrade water infrastructure.

Great Lakes & Saint Lawrence Cities Initiative

Racine (WI) Mayor John Dickert, who also serves as Chair and Director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI), teleconferenced with the Mayors Water Summit. Dickert explained that the GLSLCI is dedicated to protect and restore the vitality of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River to sustain freshwater resources for the future.

Dickert was joined by Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and others in an exchange of expressions of interest to work together on water issues. Barrett requested that Ballard inform Indiana mayors of work that GLSLCI is doing with the agricultural community to stem nonpoint source nutrient runoff. Ballard accepted the challenge.

Dickert thanked the Water Council for the consultation and stated he looks forward to more.

Copies of all the presentations are available on the website http://www.usmayors.org/urbanwater/
Praises Cities for Their Hard Work

By Judy Sheahan

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acting Deputy Administrator Stan Meiburg spoke at the closing luncheon of the Mayors Water Summit on December 5 about the progress the United States has made on environmental protection, the challenges that lie ahead, and the important role cities play.

"There's a lot to say about EPA's work with cities on water," Meiburg began. "We've made such great strides on cleaning up water in this country that it's easy to forget how far we've come — and cities have been a huge part of that success."

“When the Clean Water Act passed in 1972, two-thirds of the waterbodies in the U.S. were polluted,” Meiburg said. “Today, we've cut that number in half, and over the same period, the U.S. economy has tripled in size. It goes to show we don't have to choose between a strong economy and a safe environment—the two are intertwined.”

“In a few days, we'll celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which has been just as great a success story. Today, the U.S. has some of the cleanest drinking water in the world, with more than 90 percent of residents receiving water that meets all standards all the time,” Meiburg said.

Meiburg also pointed to the future challenges of climate change and important role that EPA’s proposed “Clean Power Plan” will have in cutting carbon pollution from the power sector by 30 percent. He stressed that they designed the Plan with flexibility so as to allow cities, states, utilities and businesses to set their own carbon pollution reduction goals. He praised individual cities such as Baltimore, San Francisco, and Napa for the work that they already had undertaken. He also addressed the long-term infrastructure challenges that climate change will bring and emphasized that we must work together to address these new realities.

“The U.S. Conference of Mayors and others have rolled up their sleeves with EPA to find innovative ways to keep our water clean, including green infrastructure and integrated planning,” Meiburg said. “Your input went into the Integrated Planning Framework released in May of 2012, as well as the Financial Capability Assessment Framework issued just last week. We look forward to your continued engagement as we evolve and adapt our programs to serve all of our goals.”
Conference of Mayors President Johnson Addresses NLC, Promotes Cities 3.0 Agenda

By Paul Leroux

Articulating the shared priorities of the two groups, Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson addressed the National League of Cities (NLC) on November 21. During his remarks, which came at the annual Congress of Cities in Austin, Johnson reaffirmed the theme of Cities 3.0 and called on both NLC and the Conference of Mayors to embrace innovation in cities.

“It is fitting that this meeting is about The Future of Cities, since at the Conference of Mayors we’ve been focused on creating Cities 3.0,” said Johnson. To address this common focus, Johnson identified key policy areas for both organizations. These include transportation reauthorization, the Marketplace Fairness Act, CDBG, and municipal bonds, all of which allow cities to solve problems and promote growth.

To promote these priorities, Johnson stressed that NLC and the Conference of Mayors should continue to work together. “Mayors and cities that must drive the resurgence of our great nation,” said Johnson. Later, he added, “It is up to our organizations to help make sure that 3.0 Cities are empowered to succeed.” Johnson praised the “close working relationship” between Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran and NLC Executive Director Clarence Anthony, and thanked outgoing NLC President St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman for, “fantastic leadership and collaboration.”

Johnson emphasized that mayors and cities now innovate for the entire country. “It used to be that the federal government and states set the agenda,” said Johnson. “We’ve flipped that construct on its head, there’s been an inversion of power. Cities are now the leaders in the nation: experimenting, taking risks, making hard choices.”

Becker Elected NLC President

During the Congress of Cities, Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker was elected to lead the National League of Cities as its president. During Johnson’s remarks, he emphasized that Becker is a valuable member of both NLC and the Conference of Mayors. “You have been a strong leader within USCM as an elected Advisory Board Member and Vice Chair for Housing, and I look forward to the work that we will do together over the coming year,” he said.

In his remarks, Becker emphasized the power of cities and mayors to think and act creatively. “It is in our municipalities and communities where real innovation, real action and real decisions are being made,” said Becker. “We are driving not just our local and regional economies, but we are driving progress in our country overall.”

Becker plans to emphasize the three federal priorities of fighting climate change, passing the Marketplace Fairness Act, and promoting the GROW America Act. He is joined in his efforts by First Vice President Melodee Colbert Kean, Councilmember from Joplin, and Second Vice President Matt Zone, Councilmember from Cleveland.
President Obama hosted a White House Summit on Early Education December 10, bringing together a broad coalition of elected officials and philanthropic, business, education, and advocacy leaders, along with other stakeholders who are committed to expanding access to high-quality early education. The summit built on the President’s call in his 2013 State of the Union address to expand access to high-quality early childhood education to every child in America.

West Sacramento Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, Chair of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Jobs, Education and the Workforce Standing Committee, Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, Vice Chair for Grade Level Reading of the Jobs Committee, Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto and Seattle Mayor Ed Murray attended and participated in the summit.

“Equity in education is the foundation of our democracy and the future of our country. Universal pre-K changes people’s lives. Leveling the playing field is critical because a lack of acuity with words is hard to make up,” said Murray in his remarks.

As part of the effort, the President proposes a series of new investments that will establish a continuum of high-quality early learning for a child—beginning at birth and continuing to age five. This proposal includes extending and expanding evidence-based, voluntary home visiting, growing the supply of effective early learning opportunities for young children through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, and providing Preschool for All.

At the summit, President Obama announced that the Administration is going to award $750 million of new investment in early education. “Secretary Duncan is awarding $250 million in new Preschool Development Grants to 18 states,” said Obama. “And in order to create a full pipeline of learning programs, from birth all the way to the beginning of Kindergarten, Secretary Burwell is announcing the winners of a $500 million competition that will bring early care and education to more than 30,000 infants and toddlers next year. Our child care centers will partner with our Early Head Start Centers to help kids from virtually every state, from rural Virginia to my hometown of Chicago.”

Also on December 10, nearly 100 mayors from across the country sent a letter organized by the Conference of Mayors to Congressional leaders urging them to act to expand high-quality early childhood education and support passage of the Strong Start for America’s Children Act (S. 2452 / H.R. 3461), which would expand access to high-quality early childhood education for children across the nation and help address the inequality crisis in our nation’s school systems.

Since the President’s call to action, more than 30 states and cities have established new programs or expanded access to preschool. Studies show that for every dollar we invest in early childhood education, there is a rate of return of $8 or more through a reduced need for spending on other services, such as remedial education, grade repetition, and special education, as well as increased productivity and earnings for these children as adults.
**Automatic Enrollment: It Can Have a “Make or Break” Impact on Retirement Security for Your Employees**

By Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland

Every mayor and city council member knows there is a retirement crisis in America. In both the public and private sector, too many people are saving too little for retirement. Every year, there’s another public figure, academic or media personality telling us how bad the crisis is. But we know all that. We’ve known that for over three decades.

What we need to focus on is what to do about it.

It’s time to stop diagnosing the problem and focus on the cure. The best place to start is with the defined contribution plan maintained by your city. While your defined benefit or hybrid plan can form the foundation of retirement security for your employees, it won’t be enough on its own. In order to ensure a comfortable retirement, your employees need to have a supplemental income from your defined contribution plan. The first, and most important step is to get employees to participate in your defined contribution plan at an early age. Here is what every city should do:

1) **Automatic Enrollment and Automatic Escalation**

Every government defined contribution plan in every city in America should be compulsory when you are hired. Period. While your defined benefit or hybrid plan can form the foundation of retirement security for your employees, it won’t be enough on its own. In order to ensure a comfortable retirement, your employees need to have a supplemental income from your defined contribution plan. The first, and most important step is to get employees to participate in your defined contribution plan at an early age. Here is what every city should do:

2) **Evidence is Overwhelming**

If you participated in the Conference of Mayors Webinar on Retirement Savings on June 23, you learned that the average public employee will need a balance in their defined contribution plan of about $320,000 at retirement, if you assume a salary of $50,000 and an 80 percent replacement ratio target. Assuming the defined benefit plan pays out about $20,000 annually, the public employee would need about another $20,000 a year income to have an 80 percent replacement ratio. To generate $20,000 a year in supplemental income, the employee would need a defined contribution (DC) account balance of about $320,000.

If you started saving for retirement at age 25 (35 years to retirement) you would need to contribute about 8.8 percent of salary to have an account balance of $320,000 by age 60. This assumes an average salary of $30,000 over 35 years and an average rate of return of six percent.

However, if you waited until age 40 to start saving $320,000 for retirement, then you would need to save 28 percent of pay, based on the same assumptions.

Saving 28 percent of income is a staggering amount for any employee. That’s why it is important to start saving early, when it will only cost eight percent – nine percent of pay to achieve the same retirement income target.

3) **Make Inertia Work for Your Employees**

A variety of studies have shown that the majority of employees are not likely to be pro-active on retirement savings until it is too late. However, if placed into a retirement savings plan “automatically,” more than 90 percent stick with it and do not “opt-out.” Employees are free to opt-out, but we know that only a fraction will. Every plan sponsor should be actively implementing this. If your state has garnishment or other laws that prohibit automatic enrollment, you need to focus on changing the law. Go to your state capitol and explain the issue. Be sure your local city council (and county commissioners, if necessary) pass a resolution endorsing a change in the law. Get legislative and vendor sponsors, and get your public employee unions on board.

No One Ever Complained About Having Too Much Money in Retirement

It’s highly unlikely any participant is going to be angry at their city for making them save too much money for retirement. It’s time we really focus on what actions we can take that truly help our employees.

Conference of Mayors Can Help

You should take advantage of the resources available from the Conference of Mayors on this topic. Contact Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland at kw@usmayors.org or Jeff Bean at jbean@usmayors.org for immediate assistance with this important issue.
Philadelphia isn’t an easy place to govern. But Mayor Michael Nutter has undoubtedly made an outsized impact on the city, creating a Philadelphia that’s cleaner, safer, smarter and more fiscally sound than the city he began leading in 2008. Becoming mayor just as the recession was deepening prevented Nutter from launching many grand new initiatives. Instead, he has done the dig-in-the-ground dirty work that has put the city on a firmer financial footing and fostered in Philadelphia a new sense of energy and innovation. “He helped right the ship by not panicking and [by] having long-term goals, not short-term fixes,” says Randall Miller, a historian at St. Joseph’s University.

The homicide rate has dropped by more than 35 percent, while violent crime in general continues to tick down. The city’s public schools, which are largely run by the state, are still a work in progress, but the high school dropout rate has come down 20 percent in recent years. In September, Nutter helped persuade Harrisburg to allow a cigarette tax that will help patch the school district’s shoddy finances. Nutter didn’t get everything he wanted from a pension overhaul, but he did update an antiquated, opaque and clearly unfair property assessment system. He oversaw the city’s first comprehensive plan in more than 50 years -- a document that could take into account the growing number of young professionals and small and innovative businesses drawn to the city on his watch, helping to expand and brighten Center City.

On the national level, Nutter has been a leading voice on issues such as gun control, combating obesity among residents trapped in low-nutrition food deserts, greener building and stormwater runoff, and maintaining funding for Community Development Block Grants. “He is a student of government who has become the professor,” says Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto. “He has earned his way into the dean’s role of mayors across America.”

At home, Nutter has made a government never well known for good customer service run more smoothly, both through strong appointments and his endless interest in tinkering through his Office of New Urban Mechanics. It’s far from perfect, but citizens who interact with the city now can expect to get a result -- without having to rely on the pay-to-play ways that formerly dominated dealings with city hall. “There hasn’t been so much as a whiff of public corruption to taint either Mayor Nutter or his inner circle,” Philadelphia magazine noted in July.

Philadelphia still has big challenges, but Nutter has presided over a government that is more open and honest and a city that is more populous and prosperous. “In the long term, if everything keeps working the way it has,” says Miller, “Michael Nutter will be seen as one of the more effective mayors of the last half-century.”
Better Benefits: How Municipalities Can Help Employees Choose Right Benefits

By Jeffrey Bean

Conventional wisdom can be misleading. It says that people want more choices when making purchasing decisions. It says the best way to share knowledge is to provide as much information as possible. It says that people are rational and are capable of easily making the best long-term decisions for themselves and their families.

Experts in behavior economics, however, are finding all three of these statements to be inaccurate: Why do people get easily frustrated when they have too many choices? Why does too much information enable someone from making the best decision? And why, when you care about yourself and your family, is it difficult to make the best benefits decisions?

The conversation regarding benefit choices needs to happen before enrollment. Now is the time to lay the foundation for how your employees will decide on their benefits for next year.

As health plans are being redesigned and more financial responsibility is being shifted to the employee, it’s important to help them understand what choices are available as well as the cost before they need to make a decision.

Soon, we will have four generations sharing the workplace, each having a preferred method of making decisions. To engage your employees and educate them on the benefits you have available to them, we suggest the following five steps to improve your next benefits enrollment experience:

1) Get employees’ attention: Emails can be easy to ignore. And those posters that announce enrollment time can be overlooked. Stay on top of which of your city’s departments are enrolling at higher rates, and use statistics to encourage other departments to do the same. By showing your city’s employees that others are participating, it will be an effective reminder for them to enroll.

2) Emphasize communication quality over quantity: Remember that some employees preferring to receive written communication, while others may prefer electronic or verbal. Don’t just give them all three options. Let them choose the right vehicle for them.

3) Allow enough decision-making time: Employees who get just one or two weeks to make benefits decisions, research shows, are less satisfied with their benefits than those who have three or more weeks to make up their minds, according to 2014 research by Unum.

4) Provide decision support tools: Your city’s employees will want to believe they are making the best decisions for their families. But too often, they simply compare the choices rather than thinking about what they need. By sharing with your city’s employees what benefits fellow employees like them (age, marital status, etc.) are enrolling in, they can make better decisions.

5) Get personal: While technology allows us to accomplish more online than ever before, many employees still want to speak one-to-one to benefits counselors when making decisions.

By providing your employees with the best benefits communication and enrollment experience available, you will build a more satisfied workforce that has the right benefits they need at a difficult time.

For more information about Colonial Life’s products and services, contact Jeff Bean at jbean@usmayors.org or 202-446-8140.

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Houston Transforming Procurement to Transform IT

By Jeff Bean

Since 1975, the Texas Public Utility Commission has worked to regulate the state’s telecommunications and electric utilities, while implementing respective legislation. Today, the Texas Public Utility Commission is advancing the water metering system in its cities through implementation of smart water meters. Smart meters – or Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) – remain a relatively new innovation.

These systems enable measurement of detailed, time-based information and enhance the ability to collect and share data. This improves accuracy, reduces waste, and lowers costs.

Houston was the first city in the state to install the smart meters. “This important public works project began with hopes of deploying the latest technology to cut costs and improve service for those who live and work in the city,” stated Houston Mayor Annise Parker. “Not only were we able to do that, but I hope our process can serve as an example for other cities that will undertake major city-wide capital projects in the future.”

Wanted: New Ideas

Replacing millions of meters represents one of the state’s largest city-focused capital improvement projects.

Other cities that have worked on similar projects have faced deployment challenges, security issues, and technology hurdles. One of the most significant challenges other cities faced was the lack of system standardization and a disparate procurement process. This challenge is not new to government. A recent Meritalk report finds that the government spends “...73 percent of their time waiting for technology and service deployments, or performing routine tasks such as provisioning equipment and services to end users.” Typically, commodities for metering systems are purchased under individual contracts with individual vendors. However, when different system components needed maintenance, utilities found that the single vendor could not accommodate. Thus, significant dollars were wasted.

Fortunately, Houston has learned from the experiences of those before it.

Cooperative Purchasing, Public Oversight, New Efficiency

Houston began by standardizing the specification of each commodity, while also keeping the need to modify the procurement process at top of mind. To address these issues, Houston partnered with UNICOM Government because of their success working with other city and state governments on modernization projects.

UNICOM Government provided Houston with access to a broad spectrum of vendors, removing all issues related to vendor lock-in. They also utilized Amazon Web Services (AWS) to host all of the customer-facing applications in the cloud.

To streamline the procurement process of such a large-scale project, Houston leveraged the UNICOM Government contract through the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance. This purchasing cooperative provides competitively solicited contracts that are utilized by more than 55,000 state and local government agencies. U.S. Communities delivers critical contract and supplier oversight, holding suppliers to their commitment to provide their best overall value. This enables agencies to buy with confidence knowing they would not get better pricing through their own RFP process.

Saving Time, Cutting Costs, Improving Water Conservation

Today, more than 5.5 million smart meters have been installed across Texas, and Houston took the lead in the implementation of this important initiative. Statewide, these meters provide data that make it easier to detect leaks, improve efficiency, save time, cut costs, and improve water conservation.

Houston has seen a significant decrease (50 percent) in lost revenue to service non-contracted service and has reduced work orders by 40 percent. There has also been an increase in billable charges and accuracy in accounting.

These networks standardize and improve the data collection/analysis process. The result? Less time predicting and more time addressing problem areas. The networks also help to achieve revenue and cost targets, and more importantly, improve water conservation.

Moving from a traditional procurement process to a cooperative approach was a big change. However, by utilizing the UNICOM Government contract through U.S. Communities, Houston decreased the average infrastructure deployment from a five-to-six-year process to an average of six months.

As of today, installation of this innovative new infrastructure is 40 percent complete and moving forward every day.

For more information on U.S. Communities and Cooperative Purchasing, contact Kathryn Kretschmer-Weyland at kweyland@usmayors.org or Jeff Bean at jbean@usmayors.org.
By Dave Gatton

President Obama’s Export Council, chaired by Boeing Chairman and CEO Jim McNerney, met for its semi-annual meeting December 11 in the White House to make further recommendations to Obama Administration trade officials on how to expand U.S. exports to the global economy.

U.S. Conference of Mayors Trustee Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie represented the Conference of Mayors, which is a member of the council.

U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Michael Froman reported on progress in negotiating the Trans Pacific Partnership Trade agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Information Technology Agreement among others. The council congratulated Froman on concluding the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement, the first such agreement within the WTO in years.

McNerney said that the number of globally significant trade agreements being negotiated and their potential conclusion is unprecedented in trade history. It is widely believed that such trade agreements would garner bi-partisan support within Congress, but not without their controversies.

President Obama, joining the council meeting at its conclusion, said that the trade agreements currently under negotiation would establish tougher labor, environmental and other standards compared to previous agreements. This “higher standard” approach is expected to respond to concerns by some critics that trade agreements put the U.S. at a disadvantage.

He told the members that real opportunities for bi-partisan progress was possible on both the trade agenda and tax reform.

because expanded exports are critical to the economic growth of our cities.” McNerney responded by saying that the roll of mayors and governors was key to expanding trade and securing passage of both the trade agreements and trade promotion authority.

Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie

The President also announced two initiatives, naming two more High Tech Manufacturing Hubs and the Department of Labor’s new competitive program to expand apprenticeship programs for high-skilled manufacturing jobs.

Cownie told the council that the U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly supported congressional passage of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) and re-authorization of the Export-Import Bank. TPA would provide the Administration formal authority to negotiate trade deals for presentation and approval by Congress. The Ex-Im Bank, whose authorization expires on July 31, is essential to provide U.S. exporting companies both financing and insurance protections during the exporting process. Ninety percent of the companies that use the Bank are small and medium-sized enterprises.

Cownie told the council, “The nation’s mayors are ready to roll up our sleeves and advocate for these trade initiatives, because expanded exports are critical to the economic growth of our cities.” McNerney responded by saying that the roll of mayors and governors was key to expanding trade and securing passage of both the trade agreements and trade promotion authority.
The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is expanding its efforts to modernize its E-rate program, issuing a December 11 order that set forth additional actions, including most notably higher funding levels, to help bring higher-speed broadband connections to the nation's schools and libraries.

Building upon an earlier package of reforms, the new order furthers the Commission's goals to fundamentally restructure the E-rate program and accelerate the deployment of high-speed connections to schools and libraries, directing more resources to improving internal connections within buildings in addition to bringing gigabit service within the next five years.

The Commission's emphasis on E-rate modernization responds to the necessity to deliver more capable networks in schools and libraries to meet exploding demand for ever-faster Internet service to take advantage of new and expanding digital learning applications.

The FCC more aggressive deployment goals are underpinned by a larger financial commitment of Universal Service Fund resources to E-rate funding. The new order raises the annual spending cap to $3.9 billion, assuming there is sufficient demand for funding; spending at this higher level would require an additional payment of about $1.90 annually from each residential telephone customer in the U.S. Initially funded at $2.25 billion annually beginning in 1997, the current E-rate spending cap of $2.4 billion (adjusted annually for inflation) was established in 2010. In addition to higher funding, the order also seeks to improve the administration of the program and provide schools and libraries with more options for purchasing affordable high-speed broadband services.

The Commission also released data gathered pursuant to its July order documenting the connectivity gap among schools and libraries. The agency found that 63 percent of public schools—serving more than 40 million students—do not have broadband connections to their buildings capable of taking advantage of modern digital learning, a gap it projects will only grow larger as technology in learning continues to expand.

Conference of Mayors leaders in correspondence earlier this year called upon the FCC to take steps to modernize its E-rate program. In a March 17, 2014 letter to the FCC Chairman and the agency’s four other Commissioners, top Conference of Mayors leaders wrote, “This critical update is absolutely needed to bring high-speed broadband to every school and library and Wi-Fi to every classroom. 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.”

Signing the letters at that time were Conference of Mayors President Mesa Mayor Scott Smith, Conference of Mayors Vice President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, Conference of Mayors Second Vice President Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Conference of Mayors Transportation and Communications Committee Chair Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, Conference of Mayors Jobs, Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Pembroke Pines Mayor Frank Ortis, and Conference of Mayors Technology and Innovation Task Force Chair San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee.

More information about E-rate program is available on the website www.fcc.gov/e-rate-update.
House Approves 2015 Omnibus Spending Bill, Senate Expected to Approve

Most Programs Funded at or Near Current Levels

By Larry Jones and Conference of Mayors Staff

At time of publishing, President Barack Obama was waiting to receive the 2015 omnibus spending package from the Senate so he can sign it into law. The House approved the measure on December 11 by a vote of 219 to 206 after a long debate mainly over controversial provisions that would weaken some Wall Street regulations and lift restrictions on campaign contribution limits. With federal spending under current law expiring on December 11, the Senate approved a two-day extension to keep federal agencies and programs operating at current levels, and to allow more time for the Senate to work through its procedural rules and pass the nine-month omnibus bill. The Senate is expected to approve the measure December 12 or 13.

Despite strong opposition led by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA) due to the controversial provisions, the omnibus spending package passed with bipartisan support. The bill provides $2.3 billion for various state and local justice grant programs, including COPS grants, which is up $55 million over last year. The Community Development Block Grant program was slightly reduced by $30 million, Section 8 Rental Assistance received a slight increase of $127 million, Homeless Assistance Grants received $2.14 billion, a $40 million increase, and the HOME Partnership program was funded at $100 million less than last year.

The agreement keeps highway and transit programs funded at about current levels, pro-rating funds for these activities since the MAP-21 surface transportation law expires again May 31, 2015. Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants are slated for $500 million in new funding, allowing another round of competitive grant funding during this fiscal year for qualifying transportation projects. Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants are again set at $3.35 billion annually.

For job training programs the bill includes $2.624 billion, which is $36 million more than last year and it includes $79.689 million for the Youthbuild program which targets special assistance to at-risk youths. The Child Care and Development Block Grant program is funded at $2.435 billion, an increase of $75 million over last year. The Head Start program is maintained at $8.598 billion.

Below is a more detailed summary of key programs of interest to the nation’s mayors listed under broad categories.

Community Development and Housing, Staff Contact: Eugene Lowe

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula program is funded at $3 billion, $30 million below the FY 2014 enacted level. The HOME program is funded at $900 million, $100 million below the FY 2014 level. HUD’s Homeless housing programs will receive $2.135 billion, which is an increase over the FY 2014 level of $2.06 billion.

As for housing programs, Section 8 tenant-based subsidies are funded at $17.486 billion, while Section 8 project-based rent subsidies will receive $9.73 billion. Homeless veterans (VASH) are funded at $75 million which will provide 10,000 rent subsidies. Both Public Housing Capital and Public Housing Operating are slightly increased, funded at $1.875 billion and $4.40 billion, respectively. The Housing Opportunities Program for Persons with AIDS is funded at $330 million, a $2 million cut in the program from last year’s funding level. Section 202 elderly housing would receive an increase to $420 million over last year’s funding of $383 million. Section 811 disabled housing is funded at $135 million, an increase of its last year’s funding level of $126 million. Choice Neighborhoods is funded at $80 million, a $10 million cut from last year.

See BUDGET on page 23
Public Safety, Staff Contact: Laura Waxman

The package includes a total of $208 million for COPS Office programs, including $134.5 million for hiring grants, down from $151 million last year, and $7 million for a new anti-heroine task force initiative. Byrne Justice Assistance Grants are at $332 million, down from $345 million last year. Second Chance Act programs and the comprehensive school safety initiative are level funded at $68 million and $75 million respectively. Funding for violence against women grants are increased to $430 million, up from $417 million last year. Juvenile Justice grants are at $251.5 million, down from $3 million from last year. The bill includes $41 million for a new program to address the sexual assault kit backlog at law enforcement agencies.

Transportation Programs, Staff Contact: Kevin McCarty

The agreement funds highway and transit programs consistent with MAP-21 authorization levels, although prorated shares of these annual amounts are made available in that this federal surface transportation law was only extended through May 31, 2015. For highway programs, nearly $41 billion in obligation authority is available for FY 2015, with $500 million allocated to the TIGER program allowing U.S. DOT to undertake another round of competitive grants in support of winning local and state road, transit, port and railroad projects. For transit, overall funding is set at $10.7 billion, with $8.6 billion for trust fund-supported programs and $2.1 billion in general fund-supported capital grants for “new starts.”

For aviation and rail programs, the agreement continues funding at roughly last year’s levels. The Federal Aviation Administration is slated to receive $12.4 billion, a total amount that includes $3.35 billion in Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants for local airports capital projects and continued funding for the agency’s Next Generation Air Transportation Systems (NextGen). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is funded at $1.6 billion, essentially current funding, which includes funding for Amtrak with selected spending limitations, such as requiring overtime limits on Amtrak employees to reduce unnecessary costs and prohibiting federal funding for routes where Amtrak offers a discount of 50 percent or more off normal, peak fares. No funding is provided for high-speed rail.

Homeland Security, Staff Contact: Laura Waxman

In response to the President’s executive orders on immigration, the package includes a continuing resolution for the Homeland Security Department that freezes all Department agencies and programs at last year’s funding levels through February 27. This means the Department can take no action relating to FY 2015 funding for its various grant programs until after that date.

Job Training Programs, Staff Contact: Kathy Wiggins

The omnibus spending bill provides $11.9 billion for the Department of Labor, a cut of $99 million below the FY 2014 enacted level. This funding includes $9.7 billion for the Employment and Training Administration, a decrease of $651 million from the FY 2014 enacted level. The bill includes $2.624 billion, an increase of $36 million, for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grants to states to provide job training skills and assistance to low-skilled adults, dislocated workers and low-income youth with barriers to employment. It also increases the Governor’s Reserve to ten percent from 8.75 percent. It includes:
- $710.6 million to fund the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program through FY 2015;
- $270 million for Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), which is $458,000 above the FY 2014 level, including $14 million for the Transition Assistance Program;
- $1.7 billion for Job Corps;
- $79.689 million for Youthbuild, an increase from $2.155 million in FY 2014;
- $82.078, an increase of $2 million, for the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program; and
- $34 million, an increase of $4 million, to expand the successful model of Registered Apprenticeship.

Education Programs, Staff Contact: Kathy Wiggins

Overall, the U.S Department of Education would be funded at $70.5 billion, a slight $133 million decrease from fiscal 2014, with a few small increases to some programs. Pell Grant awards remain unchanged, but Congress does make some small cuts to the program. The spending bill eliminates the Administration’s Race to the Top program, which had been cut the last several years and is completely abolished this year. At the levels provided in the bill, Title I and IDEA are still both below their pre-sequester levels.

PreK-12 Education
- $13 million increase in Title I grants for disadvantaged students to • $14.4 billion
- $25 million increase to $11.5 billion for IDEA special education grants
- Slight increases for Child Care and Development Block Grant to $2.4 billion
- Head Start sees small increase to $8.1 billion respectively for those programs.
- Preschool Development Grants and the Promise Neighborhoods appropriated $250 million and close to $57 million, respectively.

See BUDGET on page 24
Higher Education and the Workforce
- $303 million moved out of the Pell surplus to cover the increased costs of student loan servicing.
- Perkins Loan program currently set to expire without legislative intervention.

Health and Human Services, Staff Contact: Crystal Swann
Some of the top line budget items for health and human services programs include:

**Ebola Preparedness and Response**— $2.742 billion is included for responding to Ebola and other infectious disease threats, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The agreement maintains level funding for the Affordable Care Act.

**Community Health Centers (CHCs)**— $1.492 billion is provided for CHCs. Combined with mandatory funding provided in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the FY 2015 program level for CHCs is $5.092 billion, an increase of $1.452 billion.

**Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)**— $3.4 billion is included for home energy assistance for low-income households, the same as the current FY 2014 level, rejecting the administration’s proposed cut to the program.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**— $6.926 billion is provided for the CDC, $42.685 million more than the FY 2014 enacted funding level.

Urban Agriculture and Nutrition Programs, Staff Contact: Crystal Swann
The bill provides total funding of $20.575 billion for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for FY 2015. Some of the top line budget items for urban agriculture and nutrition programs include:

**Women Infants and Children (WIC)**— $6.623 billion is provided for Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC, which is sufficient to meet expected needs in 2015.

The agreement does not include a House policy rider allowing schools to receive waivers from complying with improved lunch and breakfast nutrition standards in the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act. The agreement allows states to grant exemptions from whole grain standards to schools that demonstrate hardship in procuring specific products, and requires further study on reduced sodium standards, similar to the Senate provisions.

Energy, Staff Contact: Debra Dehaney-Howard
The bill provides total funding of $34.202 billion for Energy and Water Development programs. This is $142 million more than the FY 2014 bill and $519 million less than the President’s request level. Specifically, the bill provides support to programs that address areas including energy efficiency and renewable energy, climate change, electrical grid modernization, nuclear research and development, and energy technology.

Environmental Programs, Staff Contact: Judy Sheahan
**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**
The bill provides $8.139 billion for the EPA, $61 million less than the FY 2014 enacted level and $250 million more than the President’s budget request. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund receives $1.45 billion in funding, equal to the FY 2014 enacted level and $431 million more than the request. The Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund receives $906.8 million, equal to the FY 2014 enacted level and $150 million more than the request.

**Army Corps of Engineers**
The bill provides $5.483 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers, $922 million more than the budget request. A total of $1.640 billion is included for water resources projects that provide for improvements to navigation, flood risk management and for ecosystem restoration. This amount is $16 million less than the FY 2014 enacted amount and $515 million more than the request. The bill allows four new construction starts. It also provides $2.9 billion for operation and maintenance of water resources projects. That is $48 million more than the FY 2014 enacted amount and $309 million more than the fiscal year 2015 request. Further, it provides $1.1 billion for eligible activities that are reimbursed by the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Staff Contact: Tom McClimon
The National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities are funded at last fiscal year’s levels $146 million each. The stateside program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund is level funded at $42 million.
Cities Look to Delinquent Taxes, Fees, Fines for Relief

By Jeff Bean

From Main Street to Wall Street, nearly every U.S. city has felt the impact of this past year’s financial crisis. Simultaneously faced with a deteriorating tax base and growing demands for essential public services, many cities are looking to their delinquent accounts receivable for relief. Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP has been helping its city clientele do just that for over three decades.

“More and more cities are discovering that there are often millions of dollars in delinquent taxes, fees and fines that can be collected with the right plan and resources in place,” said Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP Partner and Chief Marketing Officer Mike Vallandingham. Linebarger Goggan is a Platinum Partner and longtime Business Council Member of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Their practice is focused on the collection of past due government receivables.

According to Vallandingham, it takes the right combination of operational capacity, experience and good people to drive a successful collection program. And, he went on to add that, “In this economic environment, when so many people are unemployed or underemployed, it also takes a respectful and understanding approach to dealing with those who owe our clients money.” Often, payment plans are the only answer and Linebarger Goggan can manage those as well.

Vallandingham noted that cities across the country are literally missing out on “free money” in the form of uncollected taxes, traffic citations and parking tickets simply because they are too strapped in terms of the financial and staffing resources it takes to go after it. “I personally do not believe there has ever been a better time for cities to consider a public-private partnership with the right collection firm,” said Vallandingham.

When selecting a professional collection firm with which to partner, Vallandingham explained that cities should always consider relevant experience and references, a history of success in the public sector, technology and capacity to handle a high volume of accounts and in a secure manner, and the ability and willingness to provide customized solutions to their clients. He went on to add that, “While the fees charged should be considered of course, buyer beware – you will definitely get what you pay for and cheaper is rarely better in our industry. Thus, pricing should only be one factor in the evaluation criteria and better yet negotiated with the selected firm.”

“For many years we heard from mayors throughout the country about how big a problem delinquent accounts receivables, such as taxes, were for cities,” said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. “That’s why we were pleased to add Linebarger Goggan as a USCM Platinum Partner in 2007, to help our city members successfully manage this issue and increase the revenue going into their coffers both. It is also a matter of fundamental fairness to the vast majority of Americans who always pay their taxes on time.”

More than 500 cities have turned to Linebarger Goggan for help in collecting their delinquent taxes, fees, fines, service charges, and other miscellaneous government debts. The firm has dozens of offices located coast-to-coast. Linebarger Goggan will help its government clients recover nearly $1 billion this year alone.

For more information about Linebarger Goggan, contact U.S. Mayor Enterprises COO Kathryn Kretschmer Weyland at 301-351-4350 or kweyland@usmayors.org or Jeff Bean at jbean@usmayors.org.

Local/State Leaders Meet with DOT Secretary Foxx on Renewal of Nation’s Surface Transportation Law

Left to right, National Association of Regional Councils Executive Director Joanna Turner, International City/County Management Association Deputy Executive Director Elizabeth Kellar, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, National League of Cities Executive Director Clarence Anthony, National Conference of State Legislatures Washington (DC) Office Director Molly Ramsdell, and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.
In Memoriam: 
Reprinted from Associated Press Dec 02, 2014

Dennis Walaker, Fargo’s “Flood Mayor,” Dies

By Dave Kolpack

Fargo (ND) Mayor Dennis Walaker, the man known as the “flood mayor” for leading the state’s largest city through several successful fights against the Red River, died Tuesday at his home, city officials said. He was 73.

Walaker had been battling kidney cancer for several months. Deputy mayor Tim Mahoney said Walaker was hospitalized over the weekend from a reaction to his chemotherapy.

The six-foot-five Walaker, who spent most of his career as public works director for the city, became a folk hero during the record-setting 2009 flood when he stood up to public officials who wanted to evacuate the city, which survived the high water thanks to a massive sandbagging effort.

Walaker was also known for making crest predictions that usually trumped the National Weather Service.

Byron Dorgan, former U.S. senator from North Dakota who was in office during three straight years of serious flooding in Fargo, called Walaker “a big man with a big heart” and said it was a sad night for North Dakota. “He was a tower of strength during very dangerous and difficult times for Fargo,” Dorgan. “I saw him make courageous decisions at critical moments when Fargo was threatened by record flood levels. It isn’t an overstatement that his good judgment and strong leadership had a lot to do with saving the city.”

Walaker is a native of Leonard (ND). He was first elected Fargo mayor in 2006, when flood protection was his campaign theme. He was re-elected twice, including a heated battle this year against former Fargo city commissioner Brad Wimmer.

Walaker led daily morning meetings at city hall during the 2009 flood, when he tried to lighten the mood each day by telling a joke. One day he told residents they should conserve water by showering together. Another day he told residents that once the flood fight was won, he would buy everybody a beer.

Fargo resident Eva Fredrickson said during the 2009 flood that she felt confident with Walaker at the helm and referred to the mayor as a man of the people. “He just looks like an ordinary man to me. An ordinary, run-of-the-mill man,” Fredrickson said at the time. “He’s not highfalutin and acting like he knows more than anyone else. He makes people feel real good. And every once in a while he tells a little joke.”

In Memoriam:

Johnson Issues Statement on Death of Former DC Mayor Barry

U.S. Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson issued the following statement regarding the death of former District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry:

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of former District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry who was a proud member of The U.S. Conference of Mayors for the four terms he served as mayor.

“Throughout his career, Mayor Barry worked consistently to advance the cause of the everyday man, and he has left a indelible legacy on the people of the nation’s capital that cannot be duplicated.

“The nation’s mayors mourn the loss of a charismatic personality who was also a dynamic leader who will never be forgotten.”

Former District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry
Conference of Mayors
President Johnson Commends President’s Executive Action on Immigration

By Laura DeKoven Waxman

Immediately following President Barack Obama’s November 20 announcement that he was taking a series of executive actions to improve the nation’s immigration system, Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson issued a statement in support of the President’s actions. He noted that the mayors have called for repairs to the nation’s broken immigration system for more than a decade and that the actions the President announced are consistent with the adopted policy of The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Johnson said that the President’s actions “will ensure that millions of undocumented immigrants, who want to play by the rules and pay taxes, are protected from deportation and made eligible to work.” “These actions will not only stabilize families and communities, they will strengthen the American economy and our national security. We look forward to assisting the Administration in this effort,” he continued.

Following are key provisions of the executive actions, which come within the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security:

1) Revise Removal Priorities
   by placing top priority on national security threats, convicted felons, gang members, and illegal entrants apprehended at the border; second-tier priority on those convicted of significant or multiple misdemeanors and those who are not apprehended at the border, but who entered or reentered this country unlawfully after January 1, 2014; and third-tier priority on those who are non-criminals but who have failed to abide by a final order of removal issued on or after January 1, 2014. Under this revised policy, those who entered illegally prior to January 1, 2014, who never disobeyed a prior order of removal, and were never convicted of a serious offense, will not be priorities for removal.

2) End Secure Communities and Replace with a New Priority Enforcement Program that reflects the new top enforcement priorities described above. The program will continue to rely on fingerprint-based biometric data submitted during bookings by state and local law enforcement agencies and will identify to law enforcement agencies the specific criteria for which federal enforcement officials will seek an individual in their custody. DHS promises to engage state and local governments on enforcement priorities.

3) Expand Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program to cover all undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. before the age of 16. In addition, the entry date required to qualify will be changed from June 15, 2007 to January 1, 2010, and relief (including work authorization) will last for three years rather than two.

4) Extend Deferred Action to Parents of U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents who a) are not removal priorities under the new policy, b) have been in the country at least five years, c) have children who on the date of the announcement are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, and d) present no other factors that would make a grant of deferred action inappropriate. These individuals will be assessed for eligibility for deferred action on a case-by-case basis and then be permitted to apply for work authorization, provided they pay a fee. Each individual will undergo a thorough background check of all relevant national security and criminal databases, including DHS and FBI databases.

5) Expand Provisional Waivers to Spouses and Children of Lawful Permanent Residents, not just those of U.S. citizens, and to the adult children of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents.

6) Promote the Naturalization Process by permitting the use of credit cards as a payment option for the naturalization fee, and expanding citizenship public awareness.

7) Support High-skilled Business and Workers through several administrative actions intended to better enable U.S. businesses to hire and retain highly-skilled foreign-born workers and strengthen and expand opportunities for students to gain on-the-job training.

Gracie Mansion Meeting on Executive Action, Immigration Reform

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio brought together more than a dozen mayors from around the country at Gracie Mansion December 8 to share efforts in their cities to support immigrants, discuss implementation of the President’s executive action, and discuss strategies to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson briefed the mayors on the details of the executive action. Senior White House Advisor Valerie Jarrett told the mayors that the executive action is only temporary, legislation is needed, and pressure from the mayors is critical to getting this done.

“The President's plan to act on immigration reform is crucial to creating a more just country, and the federal government is depending on cities to implement the plan. It is critical that we get it right,” de Blasio said in a press conference following the meeting. “Mayors are in the trenches and see firsthand the need for comprehensive immigration reform. We will take this opportunity to lay the ground work for a deeper national movement from the grassroots up.”
Mayors Forge New Partnerships on 25th Anniversary of Fall of Berlin Wall

By Paul Leroux and Judy Sheahan

Commemorating a watershed moment in history, a group of mayors traveled to Central Europe to discuss life in cities before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism 25 years ago. The delegation took part in official celebrations on November 9, met with local leaders and embassy officials, and visited historic locations. Each of these events gave them insight into the Cold War as well contemporary U.S. policy in the region.

Led by Indianapolis Mayor Gregory A. Ballard, a Cold War veteran, the delegation included Conference of Mayors Past President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz, Conference of Mayors Past President Akron Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic, Rochester Hills (MI) Mayor Bryan K. Barnett, and Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. Together, the group attended meetings in Prague, Czech Republic and Budapest, Hungary, in addition to the events in Berlin.

Berlin

As official guests of Governing Mayor Klaus Wowereit of Berlin, the delegation received special access to the city’s official concert and discussion to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall. At the event held in Konzerthaus Berlin, the mayors and Cochran spoke with former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and former Polish President Lech Wałęsa about their role in the end of the Cold War. Other guests included German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Parliament President Martin Schulz.

Cochran recalled the long history of relations between Berlin and the Conference of Mayors, stretching back to the administration of John F. Kennedy. He noted that in October of 1989, the Conference of Mayors visited both East and

See BERLIN on page 29
West Berlin on the 40th Anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany where they asked when the Berlin Wall would fall. Just three weeks later, the mayors were delighted to hear that the Wall had come down and the city was reunified.

While in Berlin, the delegation toured several historic sites to mark the history and effects of communism and the Berlin Wall including Checkpoint Charlie, which marked the border with the American Sector, as well as the East Side Gallery, which is the longest segment of the Berlin Wall still in existence. The mayors also took part in the large-scale public event in Berlin that weekend, the illumination of the path of the Wall with lighted balloons, and the subsequent launch of those balloons.

Ambassador John B. Emerson received the mayors at the U.S. Embassy to Germany on historic Pariser Platz. In their meeting, Ballard discussed the importance of gaining a better understanding how these cities and their military shifted from communism to democracy and the challenges that arose and are in place now. Emerson commended the mayors for undertaking this trip, and provided an overview of divided Berlin from an American perspective.

The mayors also met with Minister Counselor for Commercial Affairs Dale Tasharski, who discussed the various opportunities for U.S. cities to attract investments from Germany. Plusquellic discussed the need for more skilled labor and the need for education and training to make U.S. labor forces even more attractive to German companies. Tasharski encouraged any mayors interested in bringing German companies to their communities to reach out to the Embassy to assist them. Barnett took the opportunity while in Berlin to visit Ottobock, a German-based technology firm, that recently opened a manufacturing plant in Rochester Hills.

Left to right, Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan K. Barnett, Indianapolis Mayor Gregory A. Ballard, U.S. Ambassador of the Czech Republic Andrew Schapiro, USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran, and USCM Past President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz in the Ambassador’s official residence in Prague.

Left to right, Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan K. Barnett, Budapest First Vice Mayor for Finance Dr. Gabor Bagdy, Vice Mayor for Culture and Tourism Alexandra Szalay-Bobrovniczky, USCM Past President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz, Indianapolis Mayor Gregory A. Ballard, and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran in Budapest City Hall.

See BERLIN on page 30
Prague
The mayors traveled to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, for a series of meetings that would help them better understand political life behind the Iron Curtain, both before and after the fall of communism.

The delegation met with Mayor Tomáš Hudeček and Deputy Mayor Václav Novotný at the mayor’s residence. In their meeting, the delegation asked about the Czech Republic’s democratic transition and about developing cities in the Czech Republic.

During the meeting, Kautz asked about unemployment rates and the base of their economic development. Hudeček and Novotný said that although Prague has focused on brownfields redevelopment and maintaining its industrial base, their most important source of economic development is tourism, with nearly 4.4 million international visitors per year.

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, tourism has expanded greatly, particularly since Prague is one of the few European cities to have survived the last century without major architectural damage.

Following their meeting with Hudeček and Novotný, the mayors visited the official residence of U.S. Ambassador Andrew Schapiro. Schapiro, the son of a Czech immigrant to the United States, provided the mayors with a detailed understanding of the relationship between the two nations, from World War II up through the present day.

In Prague, the delegation also visited several sites that were important to the city’s history of resistance to communism. These included Wenceslas Square, the site of demonstrations against communism in 1969 and during the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Dr. Peter Hodal, a professor of Czech history and a scholar of European communism, joined the mayors during their time in Prague, helping to illuminate the city’s rich political and wartime history. Of particular interest was the fact that Prague has been under the
rule of nine different ruling governments within the past 100 years.

**Budapest**

The final city on the Berlin Wall tour was Budapest, where the mayors were welcomed by an official group at city hall. On behalf of Budapest Mayor Dr. Istvan Tarlos, the following officials spoke to the delegation: Dr. Gabor Bagdy, Vice Mayor for Finance; Alexandra Szalay-Bobrovniczky, Vice Mayor for Culture, Tourism, and Human Services; and Dr. Peter Szegvari, Chief Advisor to the Mayor.

When asked about the transition from communism to a democracy, the city officials spoke candidly about the difficulties they face. Under communism, Hungary’s largest foreign trade partner was the Soviet Union, but that is no longer the case. Located between world powers, Budapest has often tried to use its position to its economic advantage but it has few raw materials and limited heavy industry. Budapest does have a growing pharmaceutical presence and tourism and health/wellness spas are very strong. However, citizens expected quicker results post-communism and they expected to have the quality of lives that other democratic countries enjoy immediately. While Budapest has only an eight percent unemployment rate, the average salary is just $12,000 per year.

Budapest arranged a special visit historic Crown of St. Stephen, which was symbolic of U.S. Hungary relations during the Cold War. After decades in U.S. possession, the crowned was returned to the people of Hungary in 1978 by a delegation that included then Newport News Mayor Jessie M. Rattley.

In addition to the crown, the mayors toured a series of sites that were important to Hungarian resistance to communism. These included Heroes’ Square, and a museum dedicated to the 1956 revolution.

In Budapest, the mayors also met with U.S. Chargé d’Affaires M. André Goodfriend at U.S. Embassy, who gave them a more detailed understanding of the political situation in Hungary. Since Hungary has been at the crossroads of several major conflicts, the country’s boundaries have changed several times. This has left many former Hungarians living in other countries and led to discussions about what constitutes a “Hungarian citizen” and what rights citizens are entitled to when it comes to Hungarian elections. Goodfriend stressed that is an extremely sensitive subject that is being discussed among interested parties.

**Continued Dialogue**

Upon their return to the United States, the mayors planned to continue to advance economic development and democracy at home and abroad. They will do this by reaching out to both veterans and immigrants in their communities to continue the dialogues that began on this trip. Additionally, the mayors hoped to further investigate the options for economic cooperation with the nations and cities they visited.
Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett and television sales executive Terri Walker were married on November 26 in the bride’s hometown of Tulsa.

The city’s new first lady plans to leave KTUL-TV in Tulsa to reside in Oklahoma City with her husband. The mayor and Mrs. Cornett met on a blind date a couple of years ago.

Cornett was first elected mayor in 2004 and was re-elected this year to a record fourth term. He is also currently 2nd Vice President of The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman has announced that he will not seek re-election once he completes his fourth term at the end of 2015. Elected in 1999 and reelected in 2003, 2007 and 2011, Coleman is Columbus’ first African-American mayor, Columbus’ longest-serving mayor, and the longest-serving incumbent black mayor among major U.S. cities. He is also a Trustee of The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Chair of its Council on Metro Economies and the New American City.

“I am eternally grateful to the people of Columbus for electing me to the best job in the world,” Coleman said. “Together we have faced the very challenges that have overwhelmed cities around the country, and we have not only met those challenges, but we have harnessed that momentum to take ourselves to the next level.”

Under Coleman’s leadership, Columbus has been hailed by Forbes as the best city in the nation for working mothers and the best opportunity city in the nation for all people to succeed and enjoy a high quality of life. Columbus also has been recognized nationally as a top ten Amer-

Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard has announced that he will not seek reelection in 2015. Ballard was first elected in 2007, and reelected in 2011. Since taking office, Ballard has presided over six consecutive balanced budgets. He has tasked his administration with increasing efficiencies in city government, improving the level of service to residents and to continue growing Indianapolis as a destination for businesses and families.

Ballard is a U.S. Conference of Mayors Trustee, founder and chair of the Conference of Mayors Professional Sports Alliance, and is Co-Chair of the Mayors Water Council. In answering a recent media inquiry as to what he is most proud of, Ballard responded, “The $800 million we saved ratepayers on water. Big national story. Big old national story.”

Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett and wife, Terri Walker.

AIMCO (Apartment Investment and Management Company)

Aimco is a real estate investment trust that is focused on the ownership and management of quality apartment communities located in the largest markets in the United States. Aimco is one of the country’s largest owners and operators of apartments, with 204 communities in 23 states and the District of Columbia. Aimco common shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol AIV, and are included in the S&P 500. For more information about Aimco, visit our website at www.aimco.com.

Special Interests: City Livability, Community Development, Economic Development, Housing, Real Estate

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

Led by Conference of Mayors President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, the nation’s mayors will gather for the 83rd Winter Meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington (DC), January 21-23, at the Capital Hilton Hotel.

More than 250 mayors are expected to be in our nation’s capital where they will engage with top leaders from the Administration, Congress, and the business community, as well as thought leaders from academia. This meeting comes at a critical time as the 114th Congress begins, with many new leaders and members of the both the Senate and House.

As part of Johnson’s theme of “Cities 3.0,” Dr. Benjamin Barber will address the mayors on Thursday, January 22. Barber – an acclaimed political theorist and author – will speak about his book If Mayors Ruled the World and his effort to establish a global parliament of mayors.

Key activities taking place at the Winter Meeting will include:
• State of the Cities address by Johnson at the opening plenary luncheon on Wednesday.
• Mayors and Police Chiefs working group on improving public safety and community engagement following the tragedies in Ferguson and New York City.
• Engagement on reauthorization of the surface transportation law, enactment of the Marketplace Fairness Act, passage of comprehensive immigration reform legislation, achieving continued flexibility in meeting Clean Water Act mandates, and other top issues.
• Discussion on the My Brother’s Keeper initiative.
• And much more to be announced soon….

Education Pre-Conference January 20
There will be a Cities 3.0 Education Pre-Conference on the afternoon of Tuesday, January 20, cosponsored by The U.S. Conference of Mayors and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Areas of focus for this meeting will include:
• Leveraging big data and predictive analytics in education.
• Online badging platforms and systems.

New Mayors
Johnson and Conference of Mayors leadership are proud that many new mayors from around the country will attend the Winter Meeting. A special breakfast session will be held for new mayors and first time mayoral attendees Wednesday morning.

Evening Events
• Wednesday evening opening reception at the Capital Hilton Hotel.
• Thursday evening late-night event at the St. Regis Hotel.

Awards and Best Practices
In recognition of the spirit of mayoral innovation, a number of important awards will be presented at the meeting. These include:

- Childhood Obesity Prevention Awards, Sponsored by American Beverage Association
- USCM National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge Awards
- 2015 National Awards for Local, State, and Citizen Arts Leadership
- Dollarwise Financial Literacy Awards, sponsored by Bank of America
- USCM-Scotts Miracle-GRO 1000 Gardens and Green Spaces Grant Awards

Benjamin Barber Confirmed for Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting – REGISTER NOW!

USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson

- Childhood Obesity Prevention Awards, Sponsored by American Beverage Association
- USCM National Summer Youth Jobs Challenge Awards
- 2015 National Awards for Local, State, and Citizen Arts Leadership
- Dollarwise Financial Literacy Awards, sponsored by Bank of America
- USCM-Scotts Miracle-GRO 1000 Gardens and Green Spaces Grant Awards

Other Important Sessions
There will be informative standing committee meetings, task force meetings, and workshops over the course of the three days. The Women Mayors will meet on Wednesday afternoon, and the Mayors and Business Leaders Breakfast will take place on Thursday morning.

A draft agenda and list of pre-registered mayors can be viewed at usmayors.org.