



# NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

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## **Mayors Call For Inclusion of '04 Metro Agenda for Cities In Presidential Candidates' Platforms**

**Chicago, IL** – In the midst of the Presidential election season, The United States Conference of Mayors, a bipartisan organization of Republican, Democratic and Independent mayors, led by Conference President and Akron (OH) Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, today released the *Mayors' '04 Metro Agenda* outlining key priorities for America's cities.

The mayors of this nation are working with President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry as they continue to advocate for cities by urging both candidates to include all or part of the **Mayors' '04 Metro Agenda for Cities** in their domestic policy. The plan focuses on key issues that impact the strength of America's cities, including jobs, infrastructure and transportation investment, public safety, and brownfields redevelopment.

Conference President and Akron Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic said, "Mayors know that the social and economic prosperity of the nation depends on continued willingness to support and strengthen metro economies. This metro agenda called, *Keeping America Strong* means keeping America's metro economies strong. This is why it is critical that mayors work closely with the federal government to identify innovative approaches to address the many economic challenges currently facing cities."

America's metro areas, its cities and suburbs, are the engines that drive this nation's economy. Since 1994, U.S. metros have generated 87% of our economic growth, which translates to more than \$3.8 trillion. Our cities generate more than 85% of the nation's economic output, labor income and jobs. In the global marketplace, U.S. metros represent 48 of the world's largest 100 economies.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley said, "Presidential elections are the single greatest opportunity for America to direct its future. The growth of our metro economies is dependent on a President who will work closely with mayors to develop the most innovative and creative policies for the country. America's strength has always been locally driven, in its communities. We do not need a federal government that delivers unfunded mandates. Instead we need true partnership and real results for the American people."

"As we move through the process of selecting our next President, mayors look forward to going back to their cities and engaging both President Bush and Senator Kerry on these critical issues," Mayor Daley concluded.

Plusquellic also announced that the Conference of Mayors is taking the message of the *Metro Agenda* and job creation on the road. "We are taking our message to my home state – the battleground state of Ohio. We invite the American public to consider the *Mayors' '04 Metro Agenda for Cities* as we select our next president. We hope voters will ask tough questions about the future of our country."

Mayors from the big six cities in Ohio will embark on a 2-day bus tour through five major cities in the state to release an Ohio Metro Economy and Jobs Report that analyzes job loss and forecast future job growth.

*The Mayors '04 Metro Agenda for America's Cities* makes recommendations in the following key areas:

### **1. Jobs and Public/Private Partnerships: Keeping America Working**

The federal government must be responsive to the new realities that current and future workers face with shrinking manufacturing jobs, the slow job recovery, and global competition.

- *Tax Incentives:* Provide targeted tax incentives to attract investments in the nation's 600,000 brownfields, to help build low- and moderate-income single and multifamily housing, and to foster private investment in modern infrastructure development including transportation and water projects.
- *Modernization of Infrastructure Financing:* Develop a new, modern infrastructure investment plan using pension funds, insurance guarantees, infrastructure bonds, and creative public/private partnerships to help finance major projects in U.S. metro areas such as water, wastewater, transportation and school projects.
- *Small Business Incentives:* Shut down corporate tax loopholes that help move jobs overseas and apply revenues to small business incentives that will encourage innovation, create new, real jobs, and train workers.
- *Improved Public Schools:* Improve public schools through increased funding for the creation of smaller public high schools, Head Start and other early childhood education, early reading readiness and adolescent literacy, and after school learning and other related activities. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act should be fully funded, and there needs to be continued support for education standards and accountability.
- *Workforce Training:* Increase investment in workforce training, out-of-school and after school training and workforce preparation for youth, and summer youth employment.

### **2. Smart Investment: New Infrastructure for a New Economy**

Our metro economies need modern infrastructure to secure the nation's future economic growth, yet the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the vast majority of U.S. infrastructure a dismal overall grade of D+.

- *Transportation Investment:* Invest no less than \$318 billion over six years for reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation law (TEA-21) to build a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation system with modern transit and high-speed rails, Amtrak, bridges, large-scale transportation infrastructure projects, and metro highway systems with new technologies that link major metro areas, cut the time people spend in traffic, create more jobs, and move goods and services more productively.
- *Brownfields Redevelopment Action Grant (BRAG):* Establish a new Brownfields Redevelopment Action Grant (BRAG) investment program that can be used by cities to leverage private investment in brownfields – underutilized and/or contaminated properties -- and help preserve farmland and open spaces.
- *Homeownership and Rental Housing:* Support a comprehensive agenda to promote homeownership and the construction of affordable rental housing. Continue to fully support the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other housing programs, fully fund every section 8 voucher currently in use across the country, and continue full funding of Section 8 vouchers currently allocated.
- *Energy Self-Sufficiency:* Develop a new, innovative energy plan that frees us from dependence on oil and helps secure our economic future.

### **3. Public Safety and Homeland Security: Keeping America Safe**

As a nation, our future requires a strong, comprehensive public safety system to continue the ongoing fight against crime and protect every American community from the new threat of domestic terrorism.

- *Fighting Crime:* Support the ongoing fight against traditional crime with increased support for deployment, overtime, prevention, equipment and training programs. A new focus must also be placed on fighting rising gang crimes as well as the continuing problem of gun violence, drugs, and cyber-crime. Support the renewal of the assault weapons ban.
- *Homeland Security/First Responder Funding:* Immediately enact the recommendations of the recent Department of Homeland Security Task Force on State and Local Homeland Security Funding including: exemption from reimbursement provisions; flexibility for overtime; funding for incremental operational costs such as the protection of critical infrastructure and major events; and obligation deadlines from one level of local government to another. And, as reauthorization of the federal first responder program moves forward, include direct funding for cities, as is the position of the nation's mayors for all major federal-local partnership programs.
- *Intelligence Sharing:* Create a new communication and coordination system that links Federal officials with local officials and effectively uses the 600,000 local law enforcement officers.
- *Drug Treatment and Prisoner Re-Entry:* Provide drug treatment to every American who needs it, and institute a comprehensive agenda on prisoner re-entry with more than 600,000 ex-offenders re-entering America's communities every year.

### **4. Restrict Unfunded Mandates and Cost Shifts: Improve the Intergovernmental Partnership**

Despite the passage of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, Congress has continued to impose new mandates in areas such as the No Child Left Behind Act, special education, homeland security, election reform and environmental protection without following through on supposed commitments to provide federal funding. These new unfunded and/or underfunded federal mandates are putting enormous pressure on already stressed city and state budgets. Action must be taken to protect state and local revenues, and to restrict mandates and other federal cost shifts and preemptions.

- *Fully Fund Mandates:* Support full funding of the No Child Left Behind Act, special education, homeland security, election reform, environmental and other existing unfunded and underfunded federal mandates.
- *State and Local Sales Tax Revenues:* Support federal legislation that protects state and local sales taxes by enacting streamlined sales tax legislation, which will correct a federal preemption and authorize state and local governments to collect taxes due on remote sales.
- *State and Local Telecommunication Tax Revenues:* Support the enactment of federal legislation that will allow state and local governments to continue collecting taxes and fees on telecommunications services regardless of the medium, whether it's voice over a traditional telephone line or Internet Protocol based services.
- *Federal Preemptions that Erode State and Local Revenues:* Oppose federal legislation, regulation and policy that would redefine Internet access and telecommunication services in a way that will erode state and local revenues, or restrict their authority to tax or charge rights-of way fees.

The entire *Mayors' '04 Metro Agenda for Cities* is available at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).

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*The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.*