



The United States Conference of Mayors

KEEPING AMERICA STRONG

Mayors '04 Metro Agenda for America's Cities

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As this nation has grown, Americans have moved to cities and metro areas in great numbers. Today, more than 83% of Americans live in a metro area. Cities and metro areas are where we build parks and libraries and schools. Cities and metro areas are where we find the jobs that allow us to support our families.

In cities across America, mayors and business leaders are active partners in promoting economic development, job creation and international trade. Mayors, as CEO's of cities, have taken leadership roles as advocates for business in the global marketplace. America's metro areas, its cities and suburbs, are the engines that drive our nation's great economy. In the last ten years, U.S. metros have generated 87% of our economic growth, over \$3.8 trillion. Our metro areas generate over 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.

That is why we believe, "Mayors Do America's Business."

However, major challenges remain. Prepared by the economic forecasting firm Global Insight, the report *U.S. Metro Economies: Jobs Lost and Gained 2000-2006* calculates that:

- New jobs created in the top 10 job-creation sectors of the economy will have a 15% lower wage compared to the ten sectors that lost the most jobs during the recent recession and jobless recovery.
- Across the entire economy, all new jobs created between 2004-2006 will have an average wage of 12% less than jobs lost between 2000 and 2003.
- 14.5% fewer new job recipients will have health care coverage compared to those who lost their jobs between 2000 and 2003.

America also faces major investment challenges. The American Society for Civil Engineers recently gave the nation's key infrastructure – our roads, bridges, water systems, airports, and schools – an overall grade of D+. Additionally, too many families cannot find affordable housing. Too many brownfields – which could be used to create jobs and help preserve farmland and open space – are not being cleaned up and developed for lack of capital.

The social and economic prosperity of the nation depends, in large part, on our continued willingness to cooperate and strengthen metro economies. We must as a nation invest in our metro economies, and provide mayors and business leaders with the tools we need to help create good jobs. Mayors recognize the value of the federal government as a partner in this effort and will continue to seek new ways to assure that federal programs offer the flexibility to meet the needs of individual cities without unfunded mandates, cumbersome restrictions and expensive regulatory requirements.

Mayors believe we can strengthen and maintain the growth of metro economies by focusing our attention on four areas:

- 1. Jobs and Public/Private Partnerships: Keeping America Working**
- 2. Smart Investment: New Infrastructure for a New Economy**
- 3. Public Safety and Homeland Security: Keeping America Safe**
- 4. Restrict Unfunded Mandates and Cost Shifts: Improve the Intergovernmental Partnership**

The mayors of America and others who have joined us to draft this priorities statement invite the American public to consider the following during the presidential and congressional elections. We hope voters will ask tough questions about the future of our country, and we call on the candidates to address our priorities to help strengthen metro economies.

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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.
- *Arts and Tourism Mean Business:* Increase support and investment in programs that assist in the development of creative industries and tourism related businesses, two of the fastest job producing sectors of the economy. There needs to be established a federal Cabinet-level position to oversee a coordinated national policy for arts, culture and tourism, which strategically partners with the nation's local arts agencies and local convention and visitor bureaus.

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 21st 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.

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.

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.

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