



NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

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MAYORS HOST FAITH-BASED SUMMIT WITH NATIONAL LEADERS ON EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY

Number of Ex-Offenders to Increase by Almost 50% This Year
600,000 Prisoners Released in 2003; 860,000 in 2004; 1.8M Over the Next Three Years

Washington, D.C. – Today The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), led by Faith-Based and Community Task Force Chair and Philadelphia Mayor John Street convened a one-day summit with Congressional members, National Conference of Black Mayors President and Jackson (MS) Mayor Harvey Johnson, Baltimore Mayor Martin O' Malley, National Urban League President and CEO Marc Morial, and representatives of the faith community on the dramatic increase of ex-offenders who are re-entering communities after their release from prison.

On average, 600,000 ex-offenders are released each year from prison. This year, that number is expected to increase to 860,000; and over the next three years, the number of ex-offenders is expected to rise dramatically to approximately 1.8 million. The Department of Justice indicates that 60% of the offenders released from prison return within three years -- either because of a new crime for which they received another sentence, or because of a technical violation of parole.

"The men and women who leave prison return to our communities to face tremendous odds that hinder their success in remaining free of crime and getting their lives back on the right track. The role of faith-based communities is unique; they are welcoming and supportive and offer former prisoners forgiveness and the possibility of personal transformation. If focusing on the re-entry process is one way to begin to reduce the high rates of recidivism we now experience, then we should find a way to build on the strengths in communities of faith who reach out to ex-offenders," said Mayor John Street, Chair of the Faith-Based and Community Task Force.

The first in a series of forums focused on coordinating the efforts of the faith community with city officials and community leaders to assist ex-offenders, the summit was a product of the USCM's Mayors Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Recommendations from the Summit will be brought before the full body of the Conference of Mayors for policy consideration at its 72nd Annual Meeting in Boston in June.

"Because of their ties to the community, it makes sense to reach out to faith and community-based organizations to create opportunities for ex-offenders," said USCM Executive Tom Cochran.

The USCM launched the new Mayors Center for Faith-Based Initiatives at its January 2004 Winter Meeting. The purpose of the Center is to inform, educate and train mayors, city-designated faith-based liaisons, and other public servants on how to best engage the faith community for more effective partnerships and service.

Others participated in the Summit, including District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, Memphis Mayor Dr. Willie Herenton, Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Congressman Danny Davis (D-IL), as well as more than fifty representatives from faith-based organizations across the country.

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.

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