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Mayors, Local and County Officials Hold Bi-Partisan Press Conference on Eve of Debate Urging Vice Presidential Candidates to Address the Real Issues Facing the American People

Cleveland, OH – On the eve of the vice presidential debate in Cleveland, Ohio, leaders from three national organizations - **The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo) - Republicans and Democrats** - have come together to call on both candidates to address the real issues that are important to the American people.

Over the last few months, the nation's mayors and other local elected officials have been calling on both presidential candidates to address the issues that matter the most to the citizens of this country. Most recently, The U. S. Conference of Mayors toured the state of Ohio and St. Louis, Missouri and issued two metro economy and jobs reports that highlighted significant job losses and forecast future job growth. The National League of Cities released a new survey outlining what people think is the American Dream and whether or not they can attain it. Additionally, the National Association of Counties has raised the question of affordable housing in America with their "Paycheck to Paycheck Report".

At a joint, bi-partisan press conference on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, the site of the vice presidential debate, these national leaders, representing rural, suburban, and urban America, are respectfully urging both President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry to focus their attention on domestic and economic issues that critically impact the citizens of this country.

"As mayors, city and county officials, we work with the people of our communities everyday, and they want to hear more about the real issues that directly affect them – job creation, education, transportation investment, housing, healthcare, and public safety," said U.S. Conference of Mayors President and Akron, Ohio Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic. "Many communities have lost good paying jobs at an alarming rate. Our people are suffering and we are feeling their loss. That's why it is critical that mayors and local leaders work closely with the federal government to identify innovative ways to address the many challenges facing our communities," he added.

"I think it's time that the candidates give equal attention to what matters most to Americans—whether they can afford a safe and clean place to live; how they can better navigate the growing congestion to their workplace; how to get and retain a job that will provide long-term financial security for themselves and their families," said Charles Lyons, President of the National League of Cities and selectman from Arlington, Mass. Lyons cited a recent NLC survey identifying current perceptions about the American Dream. It found that more than two-thirds of Americans believe that the American Dream is becoming harder to achieve primarily because of financial insecurity and poor quality public education. The poll also found that while Americans believe the government should play a role in helping them achieve the American Dream, they are skeptical about whether the government can actually get the job done. "This is an alarming finding that shows the need to work together at all levels of government and across party lines to ensure hope, fairness and opportunity."

The disparity between income and affordable housing continues to be a real concern for the American people. According to NACo's "Paycheck to Paycheck" survey, released in July, income lags dramatically behind housing costs nationwide.

"The men and women who police our streets, fight our fires and educate our children deserve the opportunity to live in the communities in which they work," said NACo President and Lake County, Ill. Board Member Angelo Kyle. "That is the goal that we are working toward."

Plusquellic concluded, "America's strength has always been locally driven, in its communities. As local leaders we know that the presidential election is the single greatest opportunity for America to direct its future. We need true partnership that will deliver real results for the American people."