



The United States Conference of Mayors

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REMARKS OF MAYOR MANNY DIAZ AT THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2009

LET ME FIRST THANK MAYOR CICILLINE FOR OPENING HIS CITY TO ALL OF US.

WE RECOGNIZE THE HARD WORK OF YOUR STAFF AND THE HOSPITALITY OF THE PEOPLE OF PROVIDENCE.

HAVING HOSTED THIS MEETING LAST YEAR- I APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND EFFORT.

SOME HAD EXPRESSED CONCERNS AND DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER THIS MEETING WOULD BE AS EXCITING AS RECENT MEETINGS IN MIAMI, L.A., VEGAS AND CHICAGO.

I THINK WE CAN ALL AGREE: DAVID, YOU HAVE CREATED MORE EXCITEMENT THAN PERHAPS ANY MEETING IN OUR HISTORY.

THANK YOU, DAVID. LET'S GIVE HIM A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

CONFERENCE STAFF, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.

AS SOON AS OUR MEETING IN MIAMI ENDED, TOM AND ED CAME TO MY HOUSE, SAT ON MY FRONT PORCH AND SMOKED CIGARS. IT WAS THERE THAT I FIRST LAID OUT MY AGENDA FOR THE COMING YEAR.

YOU HAVE ALL BEEN AMAZING. YOU TOOK GREAT CARE OF ME. YOU TAKE SUCH GREAT CARE OF US.

WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE A STAFF THAT HOLDS CITIES SO DEAR.

YOU HOLD THIS SHIP TOGETHER.

LET'S GIVE OUR STAFF A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

VICE PRESIDENT NICKELS- THANK YOU FOR YOUR LEADING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM AND CHAMPIONING THE MAYOR'S ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN;

FOR YOUR WORK DURING THE TRANSITION, INCLUDING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WHITE HOUSE OFFICE FOR URBAN AFFAIRS. I KNOW YOU WILL DO WELL IN THE COMING YEAR.

GREG, YOU ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUCH AN OUTSTANDING VICE-PRESIDENT. MAYOR KAUTZ, YOU BRING HIGH ENERGY, AN UNRIVALED SPIRIT AND A DEEP LOVE FOR THIS ORGANIZATION AND OUR AGENDA.

BUT ABOVE ALL, ELIZABETH, YOU HAVE BEEN A TRUE FRIEND AND I WILL NEVER FORGET HOW YOU STOOD WITH ME DURING ALL THESE YEARS.

I WANT TO GIVE A SPECIAL THANKS TO SEVERAL PAST PRESIDENTS: MAYORS DALEY, RILEY, ABRAMSON, O'NEILL, GUIDO, WEBB AND GARNER. YOU MENTORED AND INSPIRED ME. WITHOUT YOU, I WOULD NOT BE STANDING HERE TODAY. I HOPE I LIVED UP TO YOUR CONFIDENCE AND TRUST DURING THIS PAST YEAR.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK DOUG PALMER. DOUG HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME WITH HIS ADVICE AND COUNSEL AND CAN ALWAYS BE COUNTED ON TO TELL A GREAT JOKE. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOU HAVE BEEN A FRIEND.

I WANT TO THANK ALL OF THE COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE CHAIRS. YOU DESERVE THE CREDIT FOR DEVELOPING OUR 10 POINT PLAN, AND OUR FORUM ACTION AGENDAS.

FINALLY, I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU. I KNOW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO LEAVE YOUR CITIES; TO MAKE THE TIME AND THE FINANCIAL INVESTMENT. THIS PAST YEAR, I CALLED ON YOU MANY TIMES; OFTEN WITHOUT MUCH PRIOR NOTICE.

THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING MY CALL TIME AND TIME AGAIN.

MY TERM AS MAYOR HAS CULMINATED IN THE HONOR OF BEING CHOSEN BY ALL OF YOU TO LEAD THIS ORGANIZATION THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY. BUT IS THIS NOT WHAT MAYORS ALWAYS DO?

WHETHER IT WAS MAYOR MORIAL AFTER 9/11, MAYOR MENINO FORECASTING OUR HOUSING CRISIS, MAYOR GARNER INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, MAYOR PLUSQUELLIC SAVING CDBG, MAYOR O'NEILL RESPONDING TO THE TRAGEDY OF KATRINA, MAYOR GUIDO HOSTING THE MEETING WHERE THE DEARBORN ACCORD WAS BORN, AND MAYOR PALMER HOLDING OUR ORGANIZATION TOGETHER AFTER THE TRAGIC LOSS OF PRESIDENT GUIDO WHILE AT THE SAME INTRODUCING THE MAYORS 10 POINT PLAN.

ALL OF OUR TENURES ARE MARKED BY DEFINING MOMENTS, AND MINE HAS BEEN NO DIFFERENT.

OUR MEETING IN MIAMI SEEMS SO LONG AGO.

I WAS THEN CRITICAL OF A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THAT HAD LOST ITS VALUES, ITS PRINCIPLES, and ITS SENSE OF PURPOSE.

A GOVERNMENT THAT NO LONGER INVESTED IN OUR CITIES OR IN OUR PEOPLE.

IN MIAMI, WE SOUNDED THE ALARM. BEFORE ANY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OR BELTWAY PUNDIT FIGURED OUT THAT WE WERE HEADED DOWN A PATH TOWARD ECONOMIC DISASTER, WE SAW IT.

WE WERE FIRST TO TALK ABOUT OUR REAL ESTATE AND FORECLOSURE CRISIS.

WE WERE FIRST TO CONNECT THIS CRISIS TO A MUCH BROADER, NATIONAL ECONOMIC EMERGENCY.

WE WERE FIRST TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE NEED TO INVEST IN OUR CITIES AND OUR PEOPLE.

WE SAW THE TREND..... WE KNEW WHAT LURKED AROUND THE CORNER.

THAT OUR COUNTRY WAS FALLING DANGEROUSLY BEHIND OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

THAT OUR COUNTRY WAS LOSING ITS COMPETITIVE EDGE, AND THAT AT THIS RATE, WE WOULD CONTINUE TO FALL FURTHER AND FURTHER BEHIND.

THAT WE HAD ARRIVED AT A MOMENT OF CHOICE.

WE LEFT MIAMI ON A MISSION TO CONVINCING THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES THAT OUR COUNTRY WAS HEADING FOR DIFFICULT TIMES and OF THE URGENT NEED TO LAY A NEW FOUNDATION BASED UPON THE INVESTMENTS CALLED FOR IN OUR TEN POINT PLAN.

MAYORS WERE THE FIRST TO CONNECT THESE INVESTMENTS TO THE CREATION OF MILLIONS OF JOBS, THE ADDITION OF TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO OUR GDP, AND BILLIONS IN PERSONAL INCOME AND ENERGY SAVINGS.

WE DESCRIBED THESE INVESTMENTS AS THE BEST ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN OUR NATION COULD EVER HAVE. LET ME REMIND YOU: WE SAID THIS LAST SUMMER, BEFORE THE WORLD-WIDE ECONOMIC GLOBAL MELTDOWN, BEFORE THE TERM BECAME PART OF OUR EVERY DAY VOCABULARY.

OUR MAYORS MARCH FOR AMERICA HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR THESE INVESTMENTS.

OUR ACTION FORUMS CALLED FOR INVESTMENTS IN PUBLIC SAFETY, POVERTY, EDUCATION, HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, INFRASTRUCTURE, THE ENVIRONMENT AND ARTS AND TOURISM.

AND IN NOVEMBER WHEN THE PEOPLE OF THIS NATION VOTED FOR "CHANGE," WE WERE READY ON DAY ONE TO HELP SHAPE THE CHANGE TO ENGAGE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AS PARTNERS IN RESTORING THE CATALYST OF OUR NATION'S ECONOMY OUR CITIES.

WITH A NEW PRESIDENT AND A NEW ADMINISTRATION, WE FOUND THE PARTNERS WE WERE LOOKING FOR. OUR QUESTIONS WERE ANSWERED WITH A RESOUNDING "YES WE CAN".

AND WORKING WITH OUR LONG STANDING FRIENDS IN CONGRESS, SPEAKER PELOSI, MAJORITY LEADER REID, AND MANY OTHERS, WE SET OUT TO PROMOTE THIS NEW FOUNDATION.

THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

THROUGH ARRA, WE ARE INVESTING IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION BLOCK GRANTS. WE ARE REPAIRING OUR NATION'S BACKBONE THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN OUR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND MOBILITY.

WE ARE CONNECTING PEOPLE THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY; MAKING INVESTMENTS THAT LIFT PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY AND GIVE THEM ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

INVESTMENTS TO KEEP OUR STREETS SAFE, INVESTMENTS IN THE ARTS, IN THE NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE, INVESTMENTS LONG CALLED FOR BY ALL OF US.

THESE ARE THE INVESTMENTS CALLED FOR IN OUR 10 POINT PLAN. THEY FORMED THE ACTION AGENDAS DEVELOPED DURING OUR 5 FORUMS. THE LARGEST FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN OUR PEOPLE, IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY.

THIS IS INDEED A DEFINING MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY----AND IN THE HISTORY OF THIS ORGANIZATION.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME ON THIS JOURNEY. YOU SHOULD ALL BE EXTREMELY PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED.

THE MAYORS AGENDA IS NOW AMERICA'S AGENDA.

GIVE YOURSELVES A ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

WHICH IS WHY WHAT I AM ABOUT TO SAY HAS BECOME SO DIFFICULT.

THIS IS THE PART OF THE SPEECH WHERE I WOULD HAVE CONCLUDED AND THANKED YOU FOR THIS GREAT HONOR.

BUT, THE EVENTS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS REQUIRE THAT I ADDRESS ANOTHER DEFINING MOMENT IN OUR ORGANIZATION'S HISTORY.

ONE THAT WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY WHEN THE WHITE HOUSE CHOSE TO COMPLETELY BOYCOTT A MEETING OF THE NATION'S MAYORS.

TO NOT HAVE WITH US ONE SINGLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADMINISTRATION.....IS WITHOUT PRECEDENT.

THIS IS NOT A BOYCOTT BY A POLITICAL CANDIDATE OR A POLITICAL PARTY.

IT IS A BOYCOTT BY AN ENTIRE GOVERNMENT, AND IT IS A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

LET'S MAKE SOME FACTS VERY CLEAR.

THIS IS A LOCAL ISSUE THAT IS BEING RESOLVED THROUGH AN ESTABLISHED ARBITRATION PROCESS.

IT IS A LABOR DISPUTE BETWEEN ONE UNION AND THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE.

IF YOU LOOK AROUND, OTHER BARGAINING UNITS ARE SUPPORTING THE CONFERENCE AND WORKING AT THIS EVENT: PIPE FITTERS, ELECTRICIANS, STAGE HANDS, PARKING ATTENDANTS, LABORERS, BARTENDERS AND POLICE.

THIS IS AN INFORMATIONAL PROTEST. NO ONE IS BEING ASKED TO CROSS ANY PICKET LINES.

THIS IS NOT DAVID CICILLINE'S MEETING.

IT IS A MEETING OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS.

OUR ORGANIZATION STARTED ALMOST 80 YEARS AGO AS A PARTNERSHIP WITH PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT TO PULL AMERICA OUT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

A PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON TRUST, RESPECT AND A DEEP COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

AND SO TODAY, WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR PARTNERSHIP IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

WE COME TOGETHER TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

TO TAKE THIS KNOWLEDGE BACK HOME TO ALLOW US TO DO A BETTER JOB.

BUT WE ALSO COME TOGETHER TO HEAR FROM OUR PARTNERS IN WASHINGTON.

AND THEY HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO COME.

OUR WORK HERE IS TOO IMPORTANT, THE TIMES TOO CRITICAL. WE HAVE NO CHOICE.

NONE OF US IN THIS ROOM ARE INSULATED FROM THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE.

THIS WILL NOT BE THE LAST TIME THIS ADMINISTRATION WILL BE ASKED TO MAKE A SIMILAR CHOICE.

THIS CHOICE MAY NOT DIFFER FROM FUTURE CHOICES OF GOING TO CHICAGO, LA, NY, PHILLY OR MIAMI.

THIS IS WHY THE ADMINISTRATION IS SETTING A VERY DANGEROUS PRECEDENT.

OUR PRESIDENT HAS CALLED ON ALL AMERICANS TO SACRIFICE.

MAYORS HAVE SACRIFICED BEFORE AND WE WILL DO IT AGAIN.

BUT, WE MUST NOT BE ASKED TO BEAR THIS BURDEN ALONE.

SACRIFICE OFTEN MEANS DOING THINGS THAT WE DON'T WANT TO DO; DOING THINGS WE DON'T LIKE TO DO; DOING THINGS THAT KEEP US ALL UP AT NIGHT.

THIS IS NO LONGER A CAMPAIGN WHERE SLOGANS AND SOUND BITES DOMINATE THE DAY, THIS IS THE TIME TO GOVERN, AND ALL OF US KNOW THIS BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT MAYORS DO 24 HOURS A DAY.

UNLIKE DC, WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT SACRIFICES; WE MAKE THEM EVERY SINGLE DAY.

UNLIKE DC, WE DO NOT PRINT MONEY.

UNLIKE DC, WE BALANCE OUR BUDGETS EVERY YEAR

UNLIKE DC, WE ARE OFTEN FORCED TO LAY OFF VALUED EMPLOYEES; EMPLOYEES WE GENUINELY LIKE AND WHOSE WORK WE APPRECIATE.

WE CANNOT RUN AWAY FROM OUR PROBLEMS, WHEN OUR STREETS ARE BROKEN, WHEN CRIME IS OUT OF CONTROL, WHEN HOMELESS WANDER OUR STREETS, WHEN A FATHER CAN'T FEED HIS FAMILY BECAUSE HE CANNOT FIND A JOB.

IT IS NOT THE PRESIDENT THAT GETS A PHONE CALL, IT IS NOT THE VICE PRESIDENT, OR A MEMBER OF THE CABINET – IT IS ONE OF US - THE PHONE RINGS AND THE BUCK STOPS ON THE MAYOR'S DESK.

AND WHEN THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS GET ASKED, WE CAN NOT BLAME OTHERS, OR RUN BACK TO THE SAFETY OF THE INNER BELTWAY. WE ANSWER. WE GIVE SOLUTIONS.

IT IS OUR MOST SOLEMN DUTY.

IT IS WHAT WE ARE ELECTED TO DO.

ALL WE ASK IN RETURN IS FOR A PARTNER WILLING TO SUPPORT AND STAND BY US.

IF THIS ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS ABOUT RAISING THE COLLECTIVE CONDITION OF OUR NATION, THEY MUST DO SO BY WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CITIES, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAYORS.

WE ARE THE ONES CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE, WE SEE THE DAY-TO-DAY LIFE OF OUR NATION, WE HAVE THE IDEAS THAT DRIVE AMERICA FORWARD, AND WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO MAKE THEM A REALITY.

WE ARE AMERICA'S SOCIAL INNOVATORS. WE ARE THE CHANGE AGENTS. WE KNOW HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS, AND WE ARE THE ECONOMIC ENGINES THAT MOVE OUR COUNTRY FORWARD

AND WE STILL HOLD THE PROMISE PASSED ON TO US FROM THE ANCIENTS TO LEAVE OUR CITIES GREATER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THEY WERE LEFT TO US.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS.