MAYORS KEVIN JOHNSON AND BILL DE BLASIO ANNOUNCE MAYORAL TASK FORCE TO TACKLE INEQUALITY IN AMERICA’S CITIES

Mayor de Blasio to chair task force & develop action plan to challenge America’s growing inequality crisis

DALLAS, TX – At the 82nd annual U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting, USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced the Cities of Opportunity Task Force. Chaired by Mayor de Blasio, the task force will bring together mayors from across the nation to leverage the power of municipal governments to advance a national, common equity agenda.

“The purpose of cities is to lift up residents and build a community and economy that works for everyone,” said Mayor Johnson. “That means having a higher minimum wage, expanding the supply of affordable housing and ensuring every child has access to Pre-K. I’m pleased the USCM is tackling these issues head-on by forming a task force called “Cities of Opportunity,” chaired by NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio.”

Flanked by mayors from across the country, Mayor de Blasio said, “We are living in a time of rising inequality and declining opportunity – this is a threat to our fundamental values and an obstacle to the nation’s economic growth.

“Mayors are starting to respond to this crisis, and this task force is going to organize and focus the progressive ideas coming out of cities across the U.S., and put city issues back on the national agenda. Cities are the problem solvers and the centers of innovation. As Mayors, we are on the front lines. It is our responsibility to create more opportunities for our citizens and more equitable cities.”

The task force’s Vice Chair will be Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh. Mayor Walsh said, "This is a national problem, but we feel the impact of income inequality particularly in Boston's neighborhoods. Some areas have seen a development boom, significant drops in crime statistics, strong advances in our education system; and yet, we struggle with concentrations of real poverty and unemployment in other neighborhoods. This inequality makes it difficult to sustain the strong workforce, active consumer base, and vibrant civic life that every city needs for lasting growth. We need solutions to bridge this growing divide, and I applaud Mayors Johnson and DeBlasio for their work. I'm proud to participate in this Task Force."

The year-long task force will develop and share governing methodologies to empower cities to make equity a central governing principle; explore how municipal powers are best used to advance an equity agenda and how cities can work together to produce the most meaningful impact; and catalogue potential tools—such as overall budget decisions, purchasing power, regulatory controls, and procurement policies—and offer a set of best practices for using these levers of municipal government to drive greater equality and opportunity.

The task force will develop an action plan for cities to take action in developing aggressive equity agendas and implement real change. This plan will include real, practical tools and best practices—both previously executed
and newly developed by the task force – which cities can use to make the most equitable decisions that they can, with the powers that they have, to create more equitable cities.

The Cities of Opportunities Task Force will conduct its kickoff meeting in New York City, August 10-11, 2014 where mayors will develop the groundwork for the scope and direction of the task force’s work.

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter said: “I am pleased to join Mayors de Blasio and Johnson and a host of other mayors from across the country to tackle inequality in America's cities. Cities are incubators of change and innovation, and mayors are at the forefront of it all- we get things done. Providing equitable opportunity directly correlates to the success of our cities, our regions and our country. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, ‘We are all tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.’ The time to act and address issues of inequality in our cities is now.”

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said: “I look forward to partnering with Mayors Emmanuel and de Blasio on this transformative task force that will look to develop policies aimed at addressing the needs of our historically underserved and disenfranchised communities.

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings said: "We as a nation will only succeed when our cities succeed together. The gap between those of means and those that are not as fortunate will only be closed with new, long-term, non-partisan and pragmatic solutions."

Houston Mayor Annise Parker said: "Even in cities with robust economies like Houston, too many are locked outside looking in on opportunity. We are pleased that the Conference of Mayors is focused on this issue to ensure that all residents of every city can have equal opportunities to thrive. This is our call to action."

The Mayors were joined by journalist Maria Shriver who is speaking at the conference about the recent Shriver report and what Mayors can do to address the one in three American women on the brink of poverty. The Shriver Report is a study that reports on the seismic shifts on the American culture and society affecting women and their families.

Maria Shriver said: “I was invited here to talk about this very subject. I am thrilled that mayors are going to convene a task force to come up with innovative ideas to help women and men in their communities. I’m here to unveil my City-Festo, which I hope will be used as a tool to move cities forward.”

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