



# NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

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## **Mayors Forum Focuses on Job Creation, Economic Growth in Cities**

*Manchester, NH* – City budgets across the country have been severely pinched by the combination of a weak economy and the demands of homeland security spending, according to a group of mayors meeting here to discuss how to spur job creation and economic growth. The mayors said local governments need economic and homeland security assistance from Washington to help address their budget challenges, meet security needs, and create more jobs.

“Cities are on the frontlines of America’s homeland security efforts and are economic engines for the nation,” said Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which organized the forum. “Yet, so far, cities have received no significant funding from Washington for homeland security or economic assistance in these difficult times.”

Cities nationwide have already spent over \$2.6 billion for homeland security, according to a survey by the Conference. Additional security needs and the threat of a new war will require even more local spending in the future. And last month, the Conference released new data showing that U.S. metropolitan areas lost nearly 650,000 jobs last year and will gain very few new jobs this year without assistance. The Manchester metropolitan area lost 1200 jobs in 2002.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has endorsed a comprehensive economic security plan that includes homeland security funding, economic assistance for local governments, strategic investments in transportation, housing, and job training, and Medicaid relief for the states.

“To keep cities like Manchester strong and vibrant, mayors need a partnership with the federal government – and, so far, Washington has simply not stepped up to the plate to provide assistance and help create jobs,” said Manchester Mayor Robert Baines, who chairs the Conference’s Urban Economic Policy Committee and hosted today’s meeting at Saint Anselm College’s New Hampshire Institute of Politics. “Indeed, the Administration’s budget proposal fails to provide any economic assistance to cities and instead makes large cuts in some key programs.”

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The President's budget proposal, released on Monday, cuts highway funding by \$2.5 billion, leaves states and cities at least \$3 billion short of what is needed to fully fund the mandates of the "No Child Left Behind Act," and eliminates funding for Youth Opportunity Grants and the highly effective HOPE VI program to rehabilitate affordable housing units.

Mayors heard different opinions on the state of the economy and how best to spur job creation and economic growth from former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, New Hampshire Republican Party Chair Jane Millerick, and members of the local community.

Participating mayors included Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Manchester Mayor Robert Baines, Nashua Mayor Bernard Streeter, Burlington (VT) Mayor Peter Clavelle, Laconia Mayor Matthew Lahey, Dover Mayor Alexander Nossiff, Arlington (MA) Mayor Charlie Lyons, and North Little Rock (Ark.) Mayor Patrick Henry Hays.

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*The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,183 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. The primary roles of the Conference of Mayors are to promote the development of effective national urban/suburban policy; strengthen federal-city relationships; ensure that federal policy meets urban needs; provide mayors with leadership and management tools; and create a forum in which mayors can share ideas and information.*