



**STATEMENT OF BOSTON MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO, PRESIDENT, U.S.
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS,
TO THE URBAN ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE FORUM
ON ECONOMIC SECURITY**

**SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE
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As we convene here today in Manchester, New Hampshire, there are grave issues weighing heavily on working families here and in cities all across America. But our people are as sturdy as some of the old mills of Manchester that made this city great. We may need to do a few things differently, but we always keep moving forward.

We all mourn the loss of the Columbia crew, but we are united in believing that the exploration of space contains many benefits for those of us here on Earth. We know we must move forward.

We all pray for a resolution of the Iraq crisis that results in a minimum loss of life and a resolution of the turmoil that has plagued that region for so long. Again, we must move forward.

We also have critical issues here at home. Our people need jobs, our states need revenue and our cities need relief from the growing demands of homeland preparedness and educational mandates. We must move forward and we must do so with a solid plan to address these needs.

The United States Conference of Mayors has put forward such a plan.

We believe that the best way to put people back to work is to invest in America, to build new housing for working families, improve transportation systems and restore brownfields to productive use.

We believe in expanding tax incentives for the private sector to do some of this needed work -- President Bush's homeownership tax credit is one such proposal. But, at the same time, we are concerned about proposals that would limit our ability to issue bonds and our use of tax credits to stimulate our economy and create jobs.

We believe that the earthquake of state after state falling into fiscal turmoil must be addressed now, as more and more of the aftershocks are shaking local governments all across America.

We also believe that it is time for the federal government to deliver on its promises to cities across America on the issues of homeland security and educational mandates. We are ready to deliver at the local level, in fact, we are already delivering on efforts to make our cities safe and our schools strong. But we cannot go much further on promises, we need the resources that a true federal-local partnership entails.

Today, we have distributed a copy of the economic stimulus plan that the mayors approved in Washington several weeks ago. We came here to Manchester because you, more than anyone else outside of Washington, have the power to shape the debate over the next twelve months. We want your feedback, and hopefully, we'll get your support and your advocacy for our platform as others come looking for your vote.

We have already started to see some bipartisan support for our platform. Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, a Democrat, and Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, a Republican, are co-sponsoring a \$40 billion plan to aid state and local governments in distress. These two senators know that any stimulus plan at the national level can be derailed at the local level by billions of dollars in cutbacks and layoffs. And this week, two New York congressmen, one Democrat and one Republican, offered a similar bill. I hope they will be joined by others in the coming weeks.

Another document that we will release today is our analysis of the Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2004 budget. Of course, we're still waiting for the FY2003 budget, so it's a little hard to compare, but we tried. In this budget, there are some positive actions -- some more money for education, for community health centers and for combating the growth of homelessness.

But there are many more cuts -- to public housing, public safety, after school programs that are so important -- that there's a lot of work we need to do to counter these proposals.

The other disturbing aspect of the '04 budget proposal is that the Administration wants to move a number of programs that grant money directly to cities and give them to the states to distribute. Well, all you are doing that way is adding an extra, unneeded layer of bureaucracy that takes its twenty percent administrative cost off the top and the people get twenty percent fewer services.

In short, we need to get resources to the front lines in our cities, to people who need government's help, we don't need them languishing in state office buildings across the country. The states need a hand from Washington, but they don't need a hand in our pockets.

Let me now turn the program back over to my friend and our host, Mayor Bob Baines.