



# **The United States Conference of Mayors**

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## **STATEMENT OF BOSTON MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO, PRESIDENT, U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS, ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S PROPOSED FY'04 BUDGET**

February 3, 2003

“The nation’s mayors, meeting in Washington last month, suggested a new urban Marshall plan to invest in our cities, our economy, our people, and our future. We proposed a comprehensive blueprint for economic recovery.

“Unfortunately, the Administration’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2004 fails to address many of our cities’ key priorities. At a time when city budgets are severely pinched by the weak economy and significant local homeland security investments, the President’s budget contains no general economic assistance for states and cities. Rather than boosting strategic investments in transportation, housing, job training, and brownfields redevelopment, the budget instead recommends very small increases and some large cuts in these and other key programs.

“While we are pleased that the budget proposes a second installment of \$3.5 billion for local homeland security investments, cities continue to wait for the first round of this funding, which was promised more than one year ago. At a time when homeland security needs are only growing, we cannot afford to neglect our first responders. We continue to urge that these funds be provided directly to local governments, where they can be invested in homeland security most quickly and most efficiently.

“While cities await homeland security funding, the Administration again proposes massive cuts in funding for programs that prevent more traditional crime, including a 77 percent cut in COPS (which would eliminate all funding to hire new officers) and the end of the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program. We must not neglect the fight against street crime while we secure our cities against terrorist threats.

“The nation’s affordable housing crisis demands federal action. So we applaud the President for proposing a homeownership tax credit, level funding for Community Development Block Grants, and a slight increase in funding for HOME, which expands the supply of affordable housing. However, we are disappointed that his budget recommends the elimination of HOPE VI, which has proven to be a highly effective tool

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for revitalizing public housing, and inadequate funding for our public housing authorities, whose budgets were already cut 10 percent this year.

“While the Administration seeks more funding for Amtrak than last year, the budget still contains only half of what Amtrak needs to maintain current services. Indeed, this budget targets for elimination six Amtrak routes. Highway funding, while higher than expected, is still \$2.5 billion short of fiscal year '02 levels and \$45 billion less than what the U.S. Department of Transportation estimates is needed to adequately maintain our existing roads. Each additional investment of \$1 billion in transportation creates more than 42,000 jobs.

“We are pleased that the budget level funds brownfield site assessment and clean-up projects, yet it eliminates entirely funding for the redevelopment of these sites, a crucial environmental and economic priority for our cities that mayors have supported for more than a decade.

“We applaud the Administration’s proposal to add almost \$2 billion to Title I of the “No Child Left Behind Act,” but that still leaves states and cities at least \$3 billion short of what is needed to meet the law’s mandates. The Administration continues to seek the elimination of Youth Opportunity Grants, as well substantial reduction in key after-school programs.”

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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. More information about the Conference and 2002 mayoral election results are available at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).*

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