



NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

1620 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone (202) 293-7330 • Fax (202) 293-2352
E-mail: info@usmayors.org URL: usmayors.org

For Immediate Release

Contact: Elena Temple (202) 861-6719/etemple@umayors.org

Monday, September 17, 2007

Ione Hess (202) 861-6725/ihess@usmayors.org

MAYORS AND GOVERNORS UNITE IN TRENTON ON CRITICAL NATIONAL ISSUES

Strategy Session on Infrastructure, Climate Protection, Crime, International Visa Policies

Trenton, N.J. – U. S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) President Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer hosted a two-day meeting of 38 mayors from around the country who serve in the Conference's leadership. The meeting was, in-effect, a strategy session on how mayors can successfully impact Congress and the presidential candidates regarding the urban agenda in the months ahead. Issues at the forefront included infrastructure, global warming, crime and the subprime mortgage foreclosure crisis.

"As CEO's of the nation cities, mayors know all too well the challenges American families face daily, so we are in the best position to offer solutions to local problems," said President Palmer.

The mayors' meeting underscored The Conference's Ten Point Legislative Agenda, *Strong Cities, Strong Families for a Strong America*, which offers policy recommendations to address America's crumbling infrastructure, the surge in violent crime in many cities across the country and many other priorities. (http://usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/documents/10-PointPlan.pdf)

Throughout its history, the USCM has fought for national infrastructure investments and is calling for tax incentives and bonds, as well as public-private partnerships to revitalize deteriorating infrastructure across the country. With the recent tragic event of a bridge collapse, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Ryback, also a meeting participant, joined a session where New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell and Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley agreed to work with the mayors to press the federal government to really deal with the nation's infrastructure needs. Although the Senate recently approved \$1 billion to speed bridge repairs in America, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that \$1.6 trillion is necessary to fix old bridges, congested highways, crowded schools and aging water facilities.

The mayors group is also pushing the number one item of its Ten Point Plan – a \$4 billion energy block grant to help them implement climate protection initiatives and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in America's cities. Sponsored by NJ Senator Menendez and MD Congressman Wynn, mayors believe that this measure represents significant progress toward a national comprehensive energy efficiency package.

"Mayors are not waiting for the federal government to act. Many cities around the country are already reducing greenhouse emissions in innovative and creative ways. And with federal partnerships, we can do so much more," said Tom Cochran, USCM Executive Director.

Already, more than 670 mayors have signed the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, which commits to reducing greenhouse emissions in U.S. cities by 7% from 1990 levels (<http://usmayors.org/climateprotection/>). And cities are taking action now to achieve the goals and are starting to see the changes toward a greener environment. (usmayors.org/climateprotection/bestpractices.html). "In the case of Trenton, we will be launching a Trenton Green Initiative on October 1st," announced Mayor Palmer. "This will be a multi-layered approach that will help the city push for sustainable development and involve the state, county and private-sector in joint efforts with Trenton to bring 'green collar' jobs as part of a responsibly energy policy."

The leadership meeting also provided an opportunity for mayors to share best practices on crime fighting/prevention measures. In item number two on the mayors' Ten Point Plan, Mayor Palmer and his counterparts around the country are calling for a new crime initiative to restore the federal-local partnership on hometown security. In the 1990s, mayors and police chiefs put extensive effort into increasing public safety and establishing a partnership with the federal government. As a result, many cities saw crime rates drop to historical lows.

In recent years, however, those partnerships dissolved and crime is now on the rise with gun violence becoming more and more prevalent. When the COPS hiring program was eliminated and local block grants (Byrne Justice Grants) were slashed, cities lost more than \$2 billion annually and begin seeing double and even triple-digit increases in violent crime. Recent statistics from the Police Executive Research Forum show that from a survey of 56 cities over a 2-year period, homicides increased by 10.21%, robberies increased by 12.27% and aggravated assaults with a firearm increased by almost 10%. "There has been so much national focus on homeland security that hometown security has been neglected," maintains Mayor Palmer.

The mayors also discussed ways they could be instrumental in mitigating the subprime mortgage foreclosure crisis. The Conference recently sent a letter calling on the Federal Reserve to use its authority to adopt rules that curb abusive lending practices. The mayors also support comprehensive Congressional legislation as the most effective response to predatory lending (www.usmayors.org to view letter).

Also, the nation's mayors are looking to ease visa restrictions on international visitors to the United States. Cities are experiencing a decline in tourism, which has fallen by 17% since 2000 to the tune of approximately \$100 billion annually. Since mayors regard travel as critical to their cities' economic vitality, they want to make travel and tourism a national policy priority.

The Conference of Mayors typically hosts two leadership meetings a year – one in the fall and one in the spring to assist in shaping the direction of the mayors' national policy agenda. Mayors who attend the meeting are the organization's top officers, Committee Chairs, Past Presidents, Advisory Board Members and Trustees. Please see a list of attending mayors/cities below.

Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, *USCM President*
Miami, FL Mayor Manuel Diaz, *USCM Vice President*
Seattle, WA Mayor Greg Nickels, *USCM Advisory Board Chair*
Anchorage, AK Mayor Mark Begich, *USCM Advisory Board and Community/Military Relations Task Force Chair*
Doral, FL Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez, *USCM Advisory Board Member*
Santa Barbara, CA Mayor Marty Blum, *USCM Sustainable Development Task Force Chair*
Elizabeth, NJ Mayor Christian Bollwage, *USCM Brownfields Task Force Co-Chair*
East Orange, NJ Mayor Robert Bowser, *USCM Advisory Board and Urban Economic Policy Committee, Census V-Chair*
York, PA Mayor John Brenner, *USCM Vacant and Abandoned Properties Task Force Chair*
Albuquerque, NM Mayor Martin Chavez, *USCM Trustee*
Providence, RI Mayor David Cicilline, *USCM Advisory Board and Children, Health and Human Services Committee Chair*
Columbus, OH Mayor Michael Coleman, *USCM Trustee*
Oklahoma City, OK Mayor Mick Cornett, *USCM Trustee*
Des Moines, IA Mayor Frank Cownie, *USCM Advisory Board and Hunger and Homelessness Task Force Co-Chair*
Chicago, IL Mayor Richard Daley, *USCM Past President and USCM Poverty Task Force Co-Chair*
Rochester, NY Mayor Robert Duffy, *USCM Criminal and Social Justice Committee Chair*
Sacramento, CA Mayor Heather Fargo, *USCM Advisory Board and Community Trees Task Force Chair*
West Palm Beach, FL Mayor Louis Frankel, *USCM Urban Economic Policy Committee Chair*
Portsmouth, VA Mayor James Holley, III, *USCM Advisory Board*
Honolulu, HI Mayor Mufi Hannemann, *USCM Advisory Board & Tourism, Arts, Pk.s., Entertain., and Sports Comm. Chair*
North Little Rock, AR Mayor Patrick Henry Hays, *USCM Trustee and Energy Committee Vice Chair*
Burnsville, MN Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, *USCM Trustee and Poverty Task Force Co-Chair*
Detroit, MI Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, *USCM Trustee and Council for the New American City Chair*
Southfield, MI Mayor Brenda Lawrence, *USCM Advisory Board & Transportation and Communications Vice Chair*
Stamford, CT Mayor Dannel Malloy, *USCM Trustee and Small Business/Partner America Task Force*
Arlington Heights, IL Mayor Arlene Mulder, *USCM Trustee and Criminal and Social Justice Committee Vice Chair*
Palatine, IL Mayor Rita Mullins, *USCM Trustee*
Pembroke Pines, FL Mayor Frank Ortis, *USCM Advisory Board*
Akron, OH Mayor Donald Plusquellic, *USCM Past President*
Minneapolis, MN Mayor R.T. Ryback, *USCM Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force Chair*
Meridian, MS Mayor John Robert Smith, *USCM Advisory Board and Amtrak Intercity Rail Investment Task Force Chair*
Irvington, NJ Mayor Wayne Smith, *USCM Ex-Offender Re-Entry Task Force Co-Chair*
Tulsa, OK Mayor Kathy Taylor, *USCM Advisory Board and Jobs, Education and The Workforce Committee Vice Chair*
Piscataway, NJ Mayor Brian Wahler, *USCM Membership Chair*
Sugar Land, TX Mayor David Wallace, *USCM Trustee and Homeland Security Task Force Co-Chair*
Austin, TX Mayor Will Wynn, *USCM Advisory Board and Energy Committee Chair*

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.