MAYORS AND POLICE CHIEFS CELEBRATE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF COPS PROGRAM; FOCUS ON COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGIES, BUILDING POLICE-COMMUNITY TRUST

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON AND ATTORNEY GENERAL HOLDER ADDRESS GROUP

Little Rock – The United States Conference of Mayors today wrapped up a meeting of mayors and police chiefs who gathered at the William J. Clinton Center in Little Rock, AR to discuss community-policing strategies, lessons to be learned from the situation in Ferguson, and ways to build trust between law enforcement and city residents.

President Bill Clinton and Attorney General Eric Holder addressed the group during the opening session on Wednesday pointing out that the tragic death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO provides an opportunity for people in America to really think about how they interact and relate to one another.

“We know that if we have a situation where the law enforcement community and the government in general is inclusive and represents all levels of the community and is connected, we’re more likely to make good decisions and less likely to make bad ones,” said President Clinton.

Attorney General Eric Holder who spoke before President Clinton noted, “The events in Ferguson focused the national spotlight on the rifts that can develop between police officials and the citizens they are supposed to protect. … Too many of America’s communities are not sharing in gains [of crime reduction]. Social ills like poverty and unemployment continue to entrap people … in lives of incarceration. … We all saw so clearly in Ferguson … the rifts between police officials and the community that they are entrusted to protect. Today as we gather together to consider ways to regain this trust ... we are taking robust and sweeping action to make good on the promises we have made.”

Holder also announced a $100,000 grant to The U.S. Conference of Mayors to advance the Conference’s work to reduce youth violence and examine ways in which mayors, police chiefs, and school leaders have come together to reduce youth violence. “This will allow cities where such violence is endemic to learn from, and to emulate, the approaches that have proven most effective,” said Holder.

The two-day gathering of mayors and police chiefs marked the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the Community Oriented Policing Services Program (COPS) as a part of the landmark 1994 Crime Bill that put 100,000 additional officers on the beat and contributed to an historic drop in crime. Other topics discussed include strategies to reduce homicides, gun violence, gang violence, domestic violence, and human trafficking; effective city-police-school partnerships; partnerships with the media; and partnerships between mayors and police chiefs.

"Instead of lamenting the way the world is, I’d rather focus on how we can all work together to make it better," said USCM President Mayor Kevin Johnson who moderated the sessions. “At its core, this meeting was about how we as leaders can use our positions to effect change in each of our communities."

“We held this meeting because we know the action in our countries doesn’t happen in the halls of Congress or our state houses; the action happens in our streets, so what we do here is absolutely critical,” said host Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola.
Following the meeting, mayors intend to work through the Conference’s Criminal and Social Justice Committee and its Task Force of Mayors and Police Chiefs to develop a set of recommendations on community policing to be presented to at the organization’s Winter Meeting in Washington in January of 2015.

“We believe this meeting will be a defining moment for the future of community policing,” concluded Tom Cochran USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

About The United States Conference of Mayors – The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1,400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.