MAYOR KAREN FREEMAN-WILSON TESTIFIES BEFORE PRESIDENT OBAMA’S TASK FORCE ON 21ST CENTURY POLICING

The Nation’s Mayors Officially Submit Their Recommendations to Improve Community Policing Recommendations to Task Force

Washington, D.C. – Gary, IN Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson testified today before the seventh listening session of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing in Washington, D.C. on a panel focused on Labor and Management Relations.

Freeman-Wilson, who chairs a U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs, also officially submitted a copy of the Mayors’ recommendations on improving community policing titled Strengthening Policing-Community Relations in America’s Cities.

Last month, the USCM Working Group unveiled its recommendations following a four-month review of policing policies and best practices nationwide, during a community policing session at the Conference’s 83rd Winter Meeting in Washington, D.C. That session, which can be viewed at www.usmayors.org, included Director of White House Intergovernmental Affairs Jerry E. Abramson; President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing Co-Chairs Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and George Mason University Professor Laurie Robinson; and Task Force Executive Director and U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services Office Director Ronald L. Davis, and was moderated by USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson.

The full report is available at http://www.usmayors.org/83rdWinterMeeting/media/012215-report-policing.pdf, and the recommendations are grouped into the following topic areas of focus:

1. Building police-community trust;
2. Improving police department practices;
3. Assuring timely and accurate communications;
4. Conducting independent investigations;
5. Addressing racial and economic disparities;
6. Providing national leadership

"We believe that improving police/community relations is not solely a law enforcement responsibility. The entire community -- business, the not-for-profit community, civic and social organizations, the faith community, police, and government at all levels -- must be involved to assure not just public safety, but justice and, equally important, a sense of justice in the community," said Mayor Freeman-Wilson during her testimony (full text at www.usmayors.org). ... "We need to look at policing from various perspectives as we work to
create a climate that allows the police to do their jobs. ... As mayors, we have to embrace this opportunity to create a dialogue that will serve our cities for generations to come -- a dialogue about race-relations and poverty, and about how we in government will engage the community every day of the year -- including those days when the police must be involved."

The Conference’s Mayors and Police Chiefs Working Group was formed by USCM President Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson following the tragedy in Ferguson and an October meeting in Little Rock, AR where nearly 100 mayors and police chiefs met at the William J. Clinton Center in Little Rock, AR to discuss different community-policing strategies, lessons to be learned from the situation in Ferguson and ways to build trust between law enforcement and city officials. The group was charged with developing a series of recommendations for local and national actions intended to improve policing in America.

Mayor Johnson, who participated in the first public listening session of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing in Washington, D.C., said, “Mayors stand at the crossroads of their communities. We are the leaders best positioned to bridge the gaps in trust and understanding our residents, all of whom want what is best for our cities.”

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