

**A Message from the Chairman
(From the Spring 2006 Urban Water Council Newsletter)**



Mayor Martin Chavez
Albuquerque, NM

Most mayors would probably agree that they couldn't ask for a more interesting or challenging job. Even the issues that may appear mundane, like municipal water and wastewater services, often require mayors to perform a balancing act involving competition for limited resources. The U.S. Conference of Mayors Urban Water Council has provided a national forum for mayors where a broad array of water resources that addresses major municipal water concerns, including water and wastewater services and security, watershed management, conservation, and finance. Its goal is to promote means of balancing competing interests in ways that best serve communities in the most economically and environmentally sound ways as possible.

The UWC endeavors to match mayors with the tools that are most appropriate to meet each city's unique water infrastructure requirements. Obviously, one city's solutions may not fit another city's problems, but the more options mayors have and the more mayors can learn about each other's experiences and best practices, the better equipped cities will be to narrow the infrastructure "needs gap."

The "needs gap," as you know, is the hundreds of billions of dollars between what is available and what is necessary to replace or rehabilitate our cities' aging water infrastructure. Despite what some critics of public-private partnerships claim, partnerships are but one of the myriad tools, along with state revolving loan funds, bonds, user fees and others that can successfully assist mayors in their efforts to provide superior water and wastewater services. In a perfect world, these services would be free to all. In this world, however, the high costs of infrastructure and services, and the public's high expectations require local governments to be resourceful.

Sometimes, it takes the private sector's expertise and resources to leverage improvements in public water infrastructure. Sometimes, cities can go it alone. Always, the more options a mayor has to make improvements in water infrastructure, the better.