

**Strong Cities...**

**Strong Families...**

for a

# **Strong America**

**Mayors' 10-Point Plan**

# **'08**

**Douglas H. Palmer**  
Mayor of Trenton  
President



**THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

**Strong Cities...  
Strong Families...  
for a  
Strong  
America**



**America's greatest resource has always been and will always be its people. Americans are innovative, bold and generous. And 85 percent of Americans now live in cities and metro areas.**

Led by America's mayors, America's cities drive our national economy — the strongest national economy in the world. Metro economies now account for 85 percent of national employment, 87 percent of labor income, and 86 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Of the largest 100 international economies in the world, 42 are US metro areas. Clearly, US metro areas are a dominant force in both the national and global economy.

But our nation faces many great challenges, and mayors welcome the opportunity to confront these challenges.

To keep US metro economies growing and to address critical domestic and international priorities — such as climate protection, job creation, security and education — there must be a stronger partnership between cities and the federal government that recognizes the leadership provided by America's mayors, and helps mayors continue to leverage private-sector investment.

Under the leadership of President Douglas H. Palmer of Trenton, New Jersey, The U.S. Conference of Mayors is taking this message directly to Presidential candidates, the media, and the voters.

We must invest wisely in our youth, our workforce, and our infrastructure in ways that spur creativity and competitiveness. Our national leaders — and those who seek to lead — must work directly with mayors on the 10 priorities identified by the members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors and contained in this document. Only by doing so can we have “Strong Cities, Strong Families, for a Strong America.”

## 7.

### Children and At-Risk Youth

There is a high school dropout crisis in America. Every school day, nearly seven thousand students drop out. That means up to 1.2 million students annually will not graduate from high school with their peers. Only about 58 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of African-American students will graduate on time with a regular diploma. Unless high schools find a way to graduate students at higher rates, more than 12 million of them will drop out over the course of the next decade, resulting in a loss to the nation of \$3 trillion. With each dropout a community suffers the loss of tax revenue and employment, higher costs associated with increased incarceration, gang membership and social services, and increased poverty. In order for our nation to begin to address the growing poverty crisis in our cities, our suburbs, and our rural areas – we must invest in childhood development, health and education.

**Early Childhood Development:** Mayors recognize that student achievement is inextricably linked to early childhood programs, health and nutrition, social service supports and parental involvement. As such, it is crucial that **funding for the Head Start, Early Head Start, In and Out of School Meal and Food Stamps programs** be increased to reach all eligible participants.

**Children's Health Insurance:** It is critical that all children receive access to quality healthcare from the earliest moments of their lives in order to develop into productive and strong members of society. **Mayors call for a comprehensive children's health insurance benefits package that will provide quality medical, dental and mental health services for all eligible low-income children.**

**Teacher Quality:** Significant federal resources are required to train, recruit and retain highly qualified teachers in school districts with a disproportionate number of at-risk students. In addition, teachers who work with at-risk youth require continued opportunities for skills development in order to learn about innovative strategies to engage students in learning.

**Quality After-School Programming:** Mayors call for an increased funding commitment to cities for quality after-school and summer enhancement programs to eliminate knowledge loss and inspire student interest in a variety of areas. Most specifically, it is crucial to strengthen and fully fund the 21st Century Learning Centers and other after-school programs intended to increase the academic achievement of at-risk students.

**Parental Involvement:** Research consistently finds that parental and community involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. **Federal education policy should reinforce parental involvement programs and encourage community members to interact with neighborhood schools.**

## 8.

### Homeland Security

#### FIRST RESPONDER FUNDING, TRANSIT SECURITY, COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

As called for in the 2007 Mayors' 10-Point Plan, the 110th Congress enacted recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission to authorize funding increases for high-risk urban areas, emergency management, and transit security. And, the new law creates a stand-alone Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program as called for by the nation's mayors.

However, more can and should be done to make sure that our nation's first responders are prepared to prevent, respond and recover from either attacks or natural disasters. We need a comprehensive federal policy on transportation security. And it is well past time that the federal government enacts comprehensive immigration reform.

**First Responder Funding:** Congress and the President must make sure that newly authorized programs for urban areas, block grants, interoperable communications, transit security and port security are **fully funded. And, we must fix the flawed delivery system and continue to make improvements in the grant application process for federal homeland security resources to make sure that funding quickly reaches cities and is flexible to meet local needs.**

**Transit Security:** With more than 7.8 billion trips taken on public transit in the first nine months of 2006, securing this critical infrastructure and protecting riders from terrorist attacks must be a major priority. **The nation's mayors are calling for a flexible Federal transit security initiative to improve security in the areas of communications, surveillance, detection systems, personnel and training. As we have done with aviation, securing public transit is a Federal responsibility and should not require a local or state match. Furthermore, security funds should go directly to the operator of that system or the jurisdiction providing the security.**

**Immigration Reform:** The nation's mayors urge enactment of comprehensive immigration reform that would improve border security, bolster economic prosperity, and provide the approximately 12 million people already in the U.S. without legal authorization an opportunity to earn their permanent residence and citizenship, provided: they have not committed serious crimes; have learned, or are in the process of learning English; and pay taxes and social security on their earnings.

## 9.

### Tourism and Arts

**Tourism:** Travel and tourism is a driving force for America's economy and diplomacy. Protecting our nation must remain paramount, but a better balance is needed between homeland security and economic vitality. Since 9/11, while the world tourism market rapidly expanded, the U.S. share of international travel declined 17 percent. Foreign visitors are increasingly deterred by America's unwelcoming visa and entry processes. Unless these problems are corrected, Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics may be adversely impacted. **The nation's mayors call for travel and tourism to be a national policy priority. We must enhance national security, while at the same time, increasing international travel to the U.S. through visa reforms, entry improvements and promotion. There must be full participation of the federal government in Chicago's pursuit to win the 2016 Olympics.**

**Arts:** The arts, humanities, and museums are critical to the quality of life and livability of America's cities. It has been shown that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates over \$166 billion in economic activity annually, supports over 5.7 million full time jobs, and returns over \$12 billion in federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts on average see a return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 that the government appropriates. Furthermore, federal, state and local governments, private foundations, corporations and individuals provide access to artistic activities for peoples of all races, creeds, and income levels. Recognizing the importance that the arts play, many countries throughout the world have established national cabinet level positions for culture and tourism. **The nation's mayors urge the creation of a Cabinet level Secretary of Culture and Tourism charged with forming a national policy for arts, culture and tourism. Federal resources must also be invested in nonprofit arts organizations through their local arts agencies with full funding of the federal arts and culture agencies.**

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