



Testimony of

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On behalf of
The United States Conference of Mayors

Before the
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
The United States House of Representatives

Field Hearing -- Seattle, Washington

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am Douglas Palmer, Mayor of Trenton and President of The United States Conference of Mayors. I am joined on this panel by Conference Vice President Mayor Manny Diaz of Miami, Conference Advisory Board Chairman Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle, Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City, and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles.

We thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of The U. S. Conference of Mayors, a national organization that represents more than 1100 U. S. Cities with a population of 30,000 or more.

We also want to thank the Committee for joining us in Seattle, Washington at The U. S. Conference of Mayors National Climate Protection Summit. We are honored that you selected our National Summit on Climate Protection to hold this field hearing titled *Bright Light in the Cities: Pathways to an Energy-Efficient Future*, and we commend the Committee for taking the steps necessary to begin addressing on a national level the issue of climate change.

Cities have always been at the forefront of innovation and progress in this country. Climate change is a global challenge that has manifested itself on a local level. Mayors from across the nation are leading the country in taking action on this monumental challenge. As the first responders, mayors are in a unique position to implement and coordinate local action that will lead to significant and real reductions in energy use and its impact on global warming.

Each of us here today, and other mayors across this country, can testify to these realities and offer perspectives on the broader challenges and opportunities before the nation. For most of us, it is about moving forward on environmentally friendly and sustainable climate protection policies and programs for our communities, where Americans live and work. It is also about meeting the challenge of making climate protection policies work where jobs are being created and retained in our communities.

One of the challenges before us is developing national policies and programs that begin to make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, while protecting our environment and creating “green collar” jobs. And, we believe that any successful climate protection strategy must include a grassroots, community-led component.

History of Activity

Mr. Chairman, the nation’s mayors have been at the forefront of promoting energy efficiency in our cities, which reflects the growing public consensus that we need to become more energy independent and, at the same time, curb rising greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2005, at our Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL, led by Mayor Greg Nickels of Seattle, The U. S. Conference of Mayors passed a comprehensive climate protection policy and encouraged mayors to sign the United States Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. At that meeting, 141 mayors pledged to begin the process of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting energy efficiency in our buildings and homes due to the lack of action by our Federal government.

Today, I am pleased to announce that more than 700 mayors representing 25 percent of the U. S. population have signed this Agreement, pledging local actions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by seven percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

We believe that to reach our goal set forth in the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and other milestones over the next couple of decades, we must forge a new partnership with the Federal government and the private sector to help accelerate efforts by mayors to protect our climate.

We have also adopted a goal along with the American Institute of Architects to make all new buildings carbon neutral by 2030. This 2030 Challenge is our way of trying to create momentum and policy consensus on where we must go with the nation's building sector over the next generation.

In addition, earlier this year the Conference of Mayors established the Mayors Climate Protection Center to support climate protection activity at the local level. Through mayoral leadership, cities nationwide continue to undertake programs that make significant strides toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Cities are expanding and enhancing traditional recycling programs; capturing methane from municipally-owned landfills to power local facilities; converting vehicle fleets from standard gasoline or diesel power to alternative fuels or hybrid gas/electric technology; and upgrading municipal buildings to be far more energy efficient. These examples demonstrate the high level of innovation and creativity that mayors are employing to not only create more sustainable communities, but to create new jobs and other economic opportunity.

National Energy Policy

Let me now speak to some key items in the energy bill, *New Direction for Energy Independence, National Security, and Consumer Protection* or H. R. 3221. When I became President of the Conference of Mayors, I made enactment of an energy efficiency block grant program a top priority. This proposal is a key feature of the Conference of Mayors' ***10-Point Plan: Strong Cities, Strong Families, for a Strong America.***

Enactment of H. R. 3221, which includes this block grant, would support community-based energy efficiency and conservation efforts. It would also enable cities to continue to develop programs that will help them reduce energy use and increase energy efficiency. Specifically, the block grant, which is, modeled after the highly successfully Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, will provide funding directly to cities, counties, and states for programs that 1) improve community energy efficiency; 2) develop and implement community strategies to reduce carbon emissions; 3) develop and implement community and transportation energy conservation programs; 4) encourage the development of new technologies and systems to decrease our dependence of foreign oil; and 5) promote development of alternative and renewable energy sources.

In addition to the block grant, we are pleased that the H. R. 3221 includes language on a new green jobs initiative; public transit services, tax incentives aimed at alternative energy sources; new energy efficiency standards for appliances; light bulbs, and buildings; new technologies to modernize the national power grid; and tax incentives for plug-in hybrids.

Because of the ongoing need for action, we strongly encourage Congress to finish its work on national energy policy and send a bill to the President by the end of the year. This legislation before us today is absolutely critical in moving not only America's cities, but the nation to the next level on climate change and Congress should be commended for its work this year. However, signing this legislation into law is not an endpoint but a starting point. We need a much more comprehensive approach that includes development of a cap and trade system that has a market plan and private sector innovation to achieve carbon savings among other things. We look forward to working with Congress on the next steps in protecting our environment.

Metro-Economies and Job Creation

The nation's strength has always been locally driven, in cities and its communities. According to our Council for the New American City, and Global Insights, U.S. metro areas are truly the engines of the American economy. They are responsible for more than 85% of the nation's employment, 87% of income, and 86% of production of products and services.

This decade, 90.5 percent of U.S. economic growth has been generated in metro areas, as metro economies have increased their share of US economic activity from 86.0 percent in 2000 to 86.7 percent in 2006. In 2007, U.S. metros accounted for 87.4 percent of GMP and generated \$12 trillion within the U.S. economy.

The bottom line is that cities are key to our national economy. Through our work on climate change, we have an opportunity to not only reduce our dependence on foreign oil, but to also create a new workforce – a green-collar, domestic workforce where green jobs remain in our communities.

In fact, according to the Apollo Alliance, a ten year, \$3 billion in investment in America's economic and energy future will add more than 3.3 million jobs to the economy.

Sustained investments in new energy technology that leads to improvements in buildings, appliances and fixtures will require us to transition from a blue-collar environment to a 'green collar' environment.

Trenton Green Initiative

Let me share with you some of the activity underway in the City of Trenton. Last month, I announced the formation of the Trenton Green Initiative, which is a new public-private partnership that will take specific action steps for not only making the City of Trenton a green and sustainable community, but also developing and achieving long-range climate protection goals that will ultimately reduce our carbon footprint.

An important component to the Trenton Green Initiative is our “green collar” careers program, which will engage the private sector in developing green collar jobs and training programs for Trenton residents.

While the goals of the Trenton Green Initiative are aggressive, we believe they can be met, and we intend to meet them by building on actions already underway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

- We have worked with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in planting more than 4,000 trees in Trenton to reduce air pollution, lower temperatures in the summer, and absorb carbon from the atmosphere;
- We are now updating our Zoning Ordinance and are in the process of expanding the use of the Sustainable Design Rating System that the New Jersey Department of Housing and Economic Development now applies to all projects in its redevelopment areas.
- We are in the process of changing the light bulbs in City Hall to candescent fluorescent light bulbs.
- We are adopting the Practical Energy Management Guidelines of the State of New Jersey’s Office of Energy Savings, which encompass specific steps to avoid wasting energy, lower costs, and increase environmental benefits.

While these actions are just a start in meeting the goals of the Trenton Green Initiative, we know further action will be necessary to meet and exceed our goals.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, I want to express again my thanks to you and Members of this Committee for holding this hearing today and your continuing efforts to address climate change issues.

The mayors of this nation believe that the time has come for Congressional action on climate change and we appreciate this opportunity to share the view of the nation’s mayors on this important issue.

The nation must continue work on ways to stop squandering our resources, to practice energy conservation, to use renewable fuels, and to develop “green collar” careers in America cities.