



# The United States Conference of Mayors

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## MAYORS KICKS OFF '08 ACTION FORUMS IN PHILADELPHIA WITH A FOCUS ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Philadelphia, PA – U.S. Conference of Mayors President Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, along with Host Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, Miami Police Chief and Police Executive Research Forum President, John Timoney, and USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran, kicked off the Mayors '08 Action Forums on crime in Philadelphia on Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> at the Westin Hotel.

The crime forum brought together over thirty mayors and police chiefs from around the country to develop an anti-crime agenda focused on updated technology for police officers; renewing the assault weapons ban and passing common-sense gun legislation to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists; increasing efforts to curb illegal drug use; effectively responding to the growing problem of youth gangs; and prisoner re-entry, and involve city residents in reducing neighborhood violence and street crime.

USCM President Mayor Diaz said, "We are discussing the crime problems we face in our cities, what can be done to respond to them, and what help we need from the federal government when solutions to those problems are beyond our reach. Many of these are national problems that require national solutions."

The mayors also released a survey of 124 cities in 36 states and Puerto Rico. Responses from cities large and small indicate that (for complete survey results: visit [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org)):

- More than four in 10 survey cities (42 percent) report that they are seeing increased crime as a result of the current economic conditions.
- Nearly three in 10 of the survey cities (29 percent) report an increase in crime resulting from the mortgage crisis and the rise in vacant and abandoned properties.
- Nearly half (46 percent) of the survey cities report that the increase in the cost of gasoline has had a significant or very significant effect on their police department. Another 46 percent say it has a moderate effect.

Delaware Senator Joe Biden joined the mayors and police chiefs for the luncheon portion of the meeting as the keynote speaker. Biden told the nation's mayors, "Our first and most solemn duty in government is to protect our citizens and safeguard our communities. Today, law enforcement is facing a perfect storm: rising crime rates, increased homeland security and limited funding resources. We are asking them to do more with less. ... I look forward to working with the Conference of Mayors to enact a comprehensive crime fighting strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that restores what we know works and takes into account new challenges like terrorism, sophisticated criminal activity and new technologies."

Today's session is the first in a series of mayoral forums in key cities around the country intended to challenge the next Presidential Administration to invest in America's cities and metropolitan areas -- the economic engines of the nation accounting for 86 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and where over 85% of people in the country live. **Recommendations from this forum and four others will be presented to the next President of the United States during the critical first 100 days of the new administration.**

Diaz believes that Washington no longer invests in its cities and its people. Further, he said, "Washington has lost its values – lost its principles – lost its sense of purpose – engaging in endless debate and partisan bickering while people in this country continue to suffer. ... Plain and simple, Washington has abandoned us."

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