



leading
together

2020

**cities
agenda**

Local Government Priorities for the **Biden-Harris Administration** in the First 100 Days

NLC NATIONAL
LEAGUE
OF CITIES

CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

Dear President-Elect Biden:

On behalf of the nation's more than 19,000 cities, towns and villages, the National League of Cities (NLC) would like to congratulate you and Senator Kamala Harris on your electoral victory. NLC's members and staff are ready to offer our expertise and partnership as you establish your new Administration. I would like to request a meeting with your transition team to discuss how we can further grow and strengthen the intergovernmental partnership between cities, towns and villages, the White House and federal agencies.

Our communities face an unprecedented set of challenges, and local leaders have met the moment by coordinating responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating local conversations around racial equity and charting a way forward to economic recovery. As your Administration maps out the next four years, we ask that you commit to leading together with our cities, towns and villages through the following actions:

Prioritize Local Leadership in the White House and Throughout Federal Agencies

As you consider potential appointments for leadership roles, NLC asks you to appoint current and former municipal leaders. City leaders have experience, relationship networks and a knowledge base that can only be gained through their years of service shaping local policy and balancing local budgets. Local leaders know what Americans want from their elected leaders because they are the level of government closest to the people. Local leaders talk with their constituents every day—in the grocery store, in places of worship, at school and community events. They understand what keeps Americans up at night and what kind of future they want for their families. Having local leaders embedded throughout your Administration will help to ensure that programs are managed in a way that reflects the lived reality of communities on the ground and that outside-the-Beltway perspectives are kept front and center. We are happy to provide input on qualified individuals at your request.

Work Together with Cities Immediately to Halt COVID-19 Damage

America's cities, towns and villages cannot wait any longer for relief. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, local governments have kept their communities running by keeping the trash picked up, providing nutritional and housing assistance to vulnerable residents, and maintaining critical public safety services without

interruption. However, these same local governments are being forced to slash programs and furlough city staff due to cratering local revenues. Although we remain grateful for emergency funding provided under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security) Act, the fact remains that most municipalities still have not received meaningful levels of federal aid to help maintain public health and safety in the face of the pandemic.

Set Local Economies on a Path to Economic Recovery

To set our communities on a long-term path to economic recovery, we must not only stabilize local budgets through much-needed emergency aid but invest in the federal programs that will restore and revitalize our cities, towns and villages. We urge you to partner with Congress and ensure consistent, full funding each year for the formula block grant programs that invest in communities directly, such as the Community Development Block Grant Program, the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, the Social Services Block Grant, Homeless Assistance Grants, and the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. Formula based block grants allocated directly to local governments have consistently proven to be the most efficient and effective means of quickly moving public funds to areas in need of relief, and to at-risk populations.

Build Back Better by Prioritizing Cities in the Administration's Agenda

NLC's priorities are nonpartisan, driven by what keeps America's residents and local elected leaders up at night. Cities help drive the national economy, and what is good for cities is good for the country.

We appreciate your commitment as a candidate to our Leading Together 2020 Cities Agenda earlier this year. While so much has changed since then, as local leaders have led the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and local conversations around racial equity, the way forward towards local economic competitiveness and rebuilding remains the same.

America's communities — rural and urban, small and large — are facing challenges and opportunities across a wide range of issues. We recommend that you adopt the following four priorities in the first 100 days of the new administration:

Building Sustainable Infrastructure

Much of our nation's infrastructure needs repair, improvement and modernization to meet the demands of the 21st century. By investing strategically, we can ensure that America's infrastructure will support a stronger economy and withstand extreme weather events.

Creating A Skilled Workforce

Investing in the American workforce is critical to protecting and expanding our nation's economic success and ensuring that all people have opportunities to thrive. Because of the diversity of local economies, the federal government needs to empower local workforce solutions, streamline federal funding, and drive new resources to proven approaches in our communities.

Ending Housing Instability and Homelessness

Housing costs continue to climb in diverse communities across the country, leaving millions of individuals and families without enough money for food, transportation and other basic needs. The growing imbalance of housing supply and demand is putting affordable housing and homeownership out of reach for too many, while undermining economic success at all levels. This crisis is overwhelming cities and service providers working at the intersection of mental health, substance use disorder and homelessness. Effective local responses require multi-sector partnerships and a strong federal partner.

Reducing Gun Violence

Local elected officials are charged with keeping our communities safe. Every day, 100 Americans die because of gun violence, and hundreds more are shot and injured. It is time for the nation's elected leaders to work together at all levels to address this crisis by advancing commonsense solutions to protect our communities and our children while ensuring that law-abiding residents maintain their Second Amendment rights.

Partnering with America's Cities, Towns and Villages

The National League of Cities looks forward to working with you on these important issues and to continuing to nurture a strong federal-local partnership. We have asked Irma Esparza Diggs, NLC's Senior Executive and Director of Federal Advocacy, to follow up with your staff. Irma may be reached directly at 202-528-2199 or by email at diggs@nlc.org.

Sincerely,



Clarence E. Anthony
Executive Director and CEO
National League of Cities

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About NLC

The National League of Cities (NLC) represents cities, towns and villages of all sizes, from the 8.4 million residents of New York City to the five residents of Thurmond, West Virginia. NLC is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. We are not partisan, but we are passionate about making America's cities great.

America's local elected leaders are Republicans, Democrats and Independents. They may disagree on some issues, but they are united in the belief that our nation is strongest when all levels of government work together to protect and advance the priorities of America's communities and their residents.

America's local elected leaders know what residents want because they are the level of government closest to the people. They talk with their constituents every day—in the grocery store, in our places of worship, at school and community events. Local elected leaders understand what keeps Americans up at night and what kind of future they want for their families.

Policy ideas from around the country

NLC works closely with local officials to elevate policy ideas built on the best practices of local governments across the country. We have the local perspective that can inform your work in Congress and the Administration.

NLC also conducts original research, from emerging issues like drones and driverless cars to annual studies of city fiscal conditions and the issues most important to mayors. We know what matters to our nation's cities, towns and villages.

An unparalleled coalition of 19,000 cities, towns and villages

In addition to our member cities, NLC partners with state-level municipal leagues. Together we are connected with the more than 19,000 municipalities in the U.S. NLC is the voice for America's cities, towns and villages of all sizes. At least 50% of NLC membership is considered a small city, with a population under 50,000. We are also the best resource to help the federal government get information to the leaders of America's cities by providing connections to municipal leaders on key areas of interest and serving as a convener for larger city-focused conversations.

A partner to implement change

NLC provides on-the-ground assistance to cities, towns and villages on all sorts of issues: attracting businesses, education and land use to name a few. Federal policies get implemented locally, which is why it is critical for the federal government to work in partnership with local leaders on solutions that move our country forward. We help make that happen.

An advocate for local priorities

NLC stands for sensible policies that help cities build economic prosperity. Cities, towns and villages help build a bridge to the middle class and help our communities grow. We look forward to serving as both a resource and partner as we work together to build better communities.

Commitment to Racial Equity

NLC supports local leaders in addressing structural racism, finding solutions and developing custom-tailored plans. NLC established its Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) program in the wake of the 2014 unrest in Ferguson, MO. The REAL program offers tools and resources designed to help local elected leaders build safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically and physically. From action guides to trainings and case studies, the NLC REAL team offers many resources to strengthen local leaders' knowledge and capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions and build more equitable communities. As local leaders look to reimagine government policies, procedures and processes to build more equitable communities, REAL is available to help city, town and village leaders learn the impact of historical inequities and design programs that dismantle structural and systemic racism. NLC aims to achieve this goal by centering racial equity in our all our work including our direct technical assistance and research.

Institute for Youth, Education and Families

The Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute) is the go-to place for city leaders seeking to improve outcomes for children and families. With expertise in early childhood success, education and expanded learning, promoting a culture of health, youth and young adult connections, and economic opportunity and financial empowerment, the YEF Institute reaches cities, towns and villages of all sizes and brings together local leaders to develop strategies via technical assistance projects, peer learning networks, leadership academies and Mayors' Institutes.

Center for City Solutions

The National League of Cities' Center for City Solutions provides research, education and analysis of key topics and trends that impact the people in America's communities. The primary areas of research include Sustainability and Smart Cities, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Housing and Community Development, Economic Development and Finance, City-State Relations and Local Democracy, International Engagement, and Leadership Education and Coaching.

National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium (NLC-RISC)

The National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium (NLC-RISC) works with state municipal league member risk pools to provide tools, resources and best practices when supporting cities, towns and villages on their property, liability, workers' compensation, unemployment and/or employee benefit programs. NLC-RISC works closely with NLC on federal issues that may impact cities and their liability, from the areas of preemption to vaccine dissemination.

Our Values for Intergovernmental Partnership and Commitment to Federalism Principles

Local officials know that governing effectively is not just about what we do; it is also about how we get it done. We want to work with President-elect Biden to bring a spirit of partnership to American politics and governance. We urge the Biden-Harris Administration to join us in making a commitment to the following principles for our work together:

- **RESPECT.** America's local leaders ask the Biden-Harris Administration to respect the authority of local government to act in the best interests of our communities—by eliminating unfunded mandates, preemptions, and other restrictions on local decision making, and by providing resources directly to local governments.
- **PARTNERSHIP.** Local leaders are committed to working together across parties and ideologies to solve problems. We ask the Biden-Harris Administration to join us in elevating America's political and policy discourse, building consensus and forging bipartisan solutions.
- **INCLUSION.** As our communities grow more diverse every year, America's local leaders want to partner with the Biden-Harris Administration to build a nation and an economy that works for everyone. That means advancing equitable policies that treat all people fairly and that create conditions where everyone can find opportunities to thrive and achieve their American dream.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY.** America's local leaders understand that we are accountable for addressing the challenges and opportunities confronting our communities and their residents. We ask the Biden-Harris Administration to join us in delivering on the promises we have made to our constituents and working diligently for positive results for America's communities.

Local leaders are committed to intergovernmental partnership, through federalism, requiring a cooperative partnership among local, state and federal governments that must be strengthened through all levels of government. The principles of federalism require acknowledgement of the respective roles, duties, and responsibilities for each level of government. Federalism is promoted when boundaries of authority and

responsibility are identified, delineated and respected by all the partners of government.

Within the intergovernmental partnership, local governments are principally responsible for providing services, solving day-to-day public problems and responding directly to the needs of citizens. Unfunded mandates impose additional disproportionate responsibilities on local governments and increased uncertainty and financial liability, without regard to the fiscal impact of those policies. As such, their impact on the division of power within the intergovernmental partnership moves us further from our foundational principles of federalism. Local leaders look forward to working collaboratively with the Biden-Harris Administration and in a manner that recognizes the importance of a federal-local partnership.

NLC's Members

2021 Officers

Kathy Maness

President

Councilmember, Lexington, South Carolina

Vince Williams

First Vice President

Mayor, Union City, Georgia

Victoria Woodards

Second Vice President

Mayor, Tacoma, Washington

2021 Board of Directors

Denise D. Adams, Mayor Pro Tempore, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Cynthia Andrus, Deputy Mayor, Bozeman, Montana

Robin Arredondo-Savage, Councilmember, Tempe, Arizona

Valerie Cooper, Councilmember, Norristown, Pennsylvania

Daniel Corona, Mayor, West Wendover, Nevada

Hardie Davis, Mayor, Augusta, Georgia

Mary Dennis, Mayor, Live Oak, Texas

Tameika Devine, Councilwoman At-Large/Mayor Pro Tem, Columbia, South Carolina

Bruce Duke, Councilmember, Kettering, Ohio

Brandon Elefante, Councilmember, Honolulu, Hawaii

Tiffany Gibson-Pitts, Councilmember, Opelika, Alabama
John Goodhouse, Council President, Tigard, Oregon
Derek Green, Councilmember At-Large, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Heather Hall, Councilwoman, Kansas City, Missouri
Shannon Hardin, Council President, Columbus, Ohio
Dontario Hardy, Kinston, North Carolina
Jeanette Herron, Councilmember, Bridgeport, Connecticut
Deana Holiday Ingraham, Mayor, East Point, Georgia
David Holt, Mayor, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Lindsey Horvath, Mayor, West Hollywood, California
Brent Jaramillo, Councilor, Village of Questa, New Mexico
Rusty Johnson, Mayor, Ocoee, Florida
Carlie Jones, Council Place 2, Forest Hill, Texas
Leo Longworth, Commissioner, Bartow, Florida
Corina Lopez, Councilmember, San Leandro, California
David Luna, Councilmember District 5, Mesa, Arizona
Adam McGough, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem, Council Member, Dallas, Texas
Josh Moenning, Mayor, Norfolk, Nebraska
Richard Montgomery, Mayor, Manhattan Beach, California
Tara Mosley-Samples, Council Representative Ward 5, Akron, Ohio
Salvatore Panto, Mayor, Easton, Pennsylvania
Stephanie Piko, Mayor, Centennial, Colorado
Sean Polster, Councilmember, Warrenton, Virginia
Gary Resnick, Commissioner, Wilton Manors, Florida
Andy Ryder, Mayor, Lacey, Washington
Laurie-Anne Sayles, Council Vice President, Gaithersburg, Maryland
Jake Spano, Mayor, St. Louis Park, Minnesota
Ty Stober, Councilmember, Vancouver, Washington
Gilbert Villegas, Alderman, Chicago, Illinois
Chasity Wells-Armstrong, Mayor, Kankakee, Illinois
Steve Williams, Mayor, Huntington, West Virginia
Angelia Washington, Councilmember, Jacksonville, North Carolina
Geoffrey C. Beckwith, Executive Director, Massachusetts Municipal Association
Brad Cole, Executive Director, Illinois Municipal League
Carolyn Coleman, Executive Director, League of California Cities
Cameron Diehl, Executive Director, Utah League of Cities and Towns
John Gallagher, Executive Director, Louisiana Municipal Association
Larry Hanson, Executive Director, Georgia Municipal Association
L. Lynn Rex, Executive Director, League of Nebraska Municipalities
Richard J. Schuettler, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Municipal League
Elizabeth Carr-Hurst, Mayor, Fairburn, Georgia, NLC Human Development Committee
Chair

Mark Douglas, Commissioner, Sunrise, Florida, NLC Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations Committee Chair
John Fogle, Councilmember, Loveland, Colorado, NLC Information Technology and Communications Committee Chair
David Sander, Mayor, Rancho Cordova, California, NLC Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee Chair
Ellen Smith, Councilmember, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, NLC Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee Chair
Craig Thurmond, Mayor, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, NLC Community and Economic Development Committee Chair
Alan Wapner, Councilmember, Ontario, California, NLC Public Safety and Crime Prevention Committee Chair

State Municipal Leagues

As founding members of NLC, the [49 state municipal leagues](#) play an important role in guiding the organization's priorities and being a voice on the ground with its members. The state leagues allow NLC to bridge its federal advocacy efforts with legislative and executive actions at the state level. While the state leagues are fully independent from NLC, they are an essential partner in advancing federal policy that supports municipalities of all sizes across the country. Only Hawaii does not have a state municipal league.

Federal Advocacy Committees

NLC's seven federal advocacy committees, together with NLC's leadership and the Federal Advocacy team, play a key role in all NLC advocacy efforts. Comprised of local officials from NLC member cities, towns and villages across the country, the committees play a central role in developing the organization's federal policy positions, which are the foundation of our advocacy efforts, and leading our advocacy on the Hill and within the Administration. Combined, these federal policy positions make up the [National Municipal Policy](#), which is a statement of goals, policies and program objectives that are reviewed annually by the NLC membership.

Community & Economic Development

Committee Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving housing, community and economic development, land use, recreation and parks, historic preservation and international competitiveness.

Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving environmental quality, clean air, energy, climate change adaptation and resilience, water quality, ecosystems and public lands, and solid and hazardous waste management.

Finance, Administration & Intergovernmental Relations Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving national economic policy, general financial assistance programs, liability insurance, intergovernmental relations, Census, municipal bonds and capital finance, municipal management, antitrust issues, citizen participation and civil rights, labor relations, Native American sovereignty and municipal authority.

Human Development Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving social services, children and learning, poverty and income support, employment and workforce development, equal opportunity, Social Security and seniors, individuals with disabilities, public health care, mental health parity and immigration reform.

Information Technology & Communications Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving telecommunications and information systems (and public access to these systems), privacy concerns, cable TV, phone services, spectrum issues, communications tower siting, universal service, broadcasting, and defense of city rights-of-way from degradation caused by installation of communications facilities.

Public Safety & Crime Prevention Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving crime prevention, corrections, substance abuse, municipal fire policy, juvenile justice, disaster preparedness and relief, homeland security, domestic terrorism, court systems and gun control.

Transportation & Infrastructure Services Committee

Responsible for developing policy positions on issues involving transportation, including planning, funding, safety and security of public transit, streets and highways, aviation, railroads and ports.

Member Councils and Constituency Groups

NLC member councils reflect the different types of communities local leaders represent – whether a college town, a military community, a large city or a small town.

Constituency groups are caucuses within the NLC. The constituency groups are networks that give local elected officials a space to express themselves and advocate

for the needs of their community. They reflect the diverse interests and backgrounds of NLC's membership and contribute to NLC's leadership development, policy formulation, advocacy and program activities.

Large Cities Council

Comprised of almost 50 representatives from member cities with populations of 200,000 or more, or the largest city in a state. Members convene to network and share ideas and solutions to challenges affecting large cities.

First Tier Suburbs Council

The First Tier Suburbs Council represents cities and towns outside of central cities and inside the ring of developing suburbs and rural areas. Members share unique challenges and strengths that should be included in national, state and regional policy discussions. Members are diverse with respect to size, demographic characteristics, age and history, resources and governmental structure.

Military Communities Council

Members come from municipalities that host or are near a military installation and face unique challenges due to this circumstance. Points of interest to the group include transportation and infrastructure concerns, strategies for collaborating with the local military and leadership, ways and means to assist in the process of retention of missions and attract additional mission sets to supported installations.

Small Cities Council

Comprised of over 150 representatives from member cities with populations of 50,000 or less. Council members convene to network and share ideas and solutions to challenges affecting small cities. University Communities Council Members share problems and opportunities which are unique to university communities, especially where a university is a dominant factor in the community. Issues of importance to university communities are economic development, transportation and infrastructure, sustainability, noise and other nuisances, housing and neighborhood concerns and partnerships between the university and the city or town.

Race, Equity and Leadership (REAL) Council

Comprised of representatives from each of NLC's committees, councils, advisory and constituency groups, the REAL council provides guidance to local leaders on efforts that address the impact of race and equity issues within their communities. The Council offers tangible insights and opportunities to apply a racial equity lens within cities and within the NLC leadership structure.

Council on Youth, Education and Families (YEF Council)

NLC's Council on Youth, Education, and Families guides the YEF Institute's work. The membership of the YEF Council, unlike any other NLC committee or council, is composed of not only local elected officials but also youth members and representatives from major national organizations concerned about children and families. As the Institute for Youth, Education and Families celebrates over 20 years of work with city leaders, the YEF Council aims to guide, support and elevate this important work. The continued amplification of not only the voices of elected officials but also those of youth leaders ensures that children and families are centered in the work of NLC.

Hispanic Elected Local Officials (HELO)

The Hispanic Elected Local Officials (HELO) constituency group was established by NLC in 1976 to serve as a forum for communication and information exchange among Hispanic local government elected officials and NLC colleagues.

National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO)

National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO) was created in 1970 to represent the interests of African American elected officials. NBC-LEO's objectives include increasing African American participation on NLC's steering and policy committees to ensure that policy and program recommendations reflect African American concerns and benefit their communities.

Asian Pacific American Municipal Officials (APAMO)

Asian Pacific American Municipal Officials (APAMO) is a constituency group whose mission is to provide Asian Pacific American municipal officials and their colleagues with a forum to share ideas and develop leadership experience.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Local Officials (LGBTLO)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Local Officials (LGBTLO) constituency group is a voluntary association of local elected and appointed officials formed to encourage involvement in NLC.

Women in Municipal Government (WIMG)

Women in Municipal Government (WIMG) strives to raise awareness about issues of concern to women, and it encourages women to seek public office in their communities. WIMG was formed in 1974 to serve as a forum for communication and networking among women municipal officials and their colleagues.

Opportunities for Engagement

NLC's conferences and events throughout the year offer the opportunity to engage with thousands of local elected officials, appointed leaders and city staff. While the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the format of some of these convenings in 2021, NLC and its members continue to gather to share ideas and learn from other local leaders across the country.

Municipal Fly-Ins

Year-round

Municipal leaders are well positioned to educate Congress on the impact of legislative issues on intergovernmental relations. Every year, municipal delegations across the country commit to advocating on behalf of their communities by building and reinforcing critical relationships with their Congressional delegation and the Administration. These leaders bring on-the-ground examples of how federal policies impact communities in their states.

Congressional City Conference

March 7-10, 2021 | Online

Each year, over 3,000 local elected officials and staff convene in Washington, DC to advocate for local priorities on Capitol Hill and in the Administration. The [Congressional City Conference](#) offers an opportunity for local leaders to collaborate with their peers and members of Congress and the Administration to ensure that federal policy issues and initiatives important to local governments remain front and center in Washington.

Summer Board & Leadership Meeting

June | Various locations

The Board of Directors, Committees and Councils convene to discuss and consider NLC policy positions on important federal issues. The Summer Board and Leadership meeting is an opportunity for local leaders to dive deeply into policy issues, analyzing best practices and identifying opportunities for partnership with the federal government.

City Summit

November 18-20, 2021 | Salt Lake City

At City Summit, over 4,000 local elected officials and staff from all 50 states come together in search of solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing cities today. City Summit is an opportunity for local leaders to learn, collaborate and find tangible solutions and best practices from experts in the private and public sectors to improve the conditions back home.

Top Priorities

Local leaders look forward to working with the Biden-Harris Administration to deliver common-sense solutions for growing the economy, promoting public safety and investing in the 21st-century infrastructure that will help all of America thrive.

Cities Are Essential: Recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Cities are the engine of our nation's economy and essential to America's economic recovery. From infrastructure like roads and water to parks and libraries, to workforce development centers and business support, to law enforcement and emergency services, cities, towns and villages create the conditions that drive new business, spur innovation, and attract talent and investment. Local governments invest \$1.7 trillion annually on services such as transportation, public safety and education.

Communities will use federal aid and support to facilitate a reopening of the national economy. Local governments are calling for at least \$500 billion in direct federal funding to protect families, municipal workers and America's economic future.

America's communities are hurting. Municipal [revenues have dropped](#) by an average of 21% since the start of the pandemic, while expenses have increased by an average of 17%. Without federal assistance, we face the real possibility of some cities not surviving. This is well beyond just revenue loss; some communities are facing catastrophe. Our way through this crisis is a tried-and-true method – partnership, unity, and trust. A truly united effort between state, federal, local leaders, and America's residents.

Our national leaders need to move past the partisan rhetoric and come to an agreement to stop the financial decimation our communities are facing. The White House and Congress must proceed with negotiations, as millions of Americans in cities of all shapes and sizes will be negatively impacted if direct federal aid is not provided to the thousands of communities that have been left behind.

The consequences of this economic fallout are impacting our hometowns faster than we could have imagined. The revenue decline that took six years for cities to fully feel in the Great Recession has already happened in just the few short months of this pandemic-downturn – and it will not go away easily. It took over a decade for local revenues to bounce back from the Great Recession. It is predicted that it will take years for local economies to recover from this recession.

We need both unemployment insurance and unemployment prevention. We cannot do one without the other. The extension of unemployment benefits is a band aid; we also need to stop the bleeding. One of the most effective measures for unemployment prevention is aid to local governments. Assistance to cities must be tied to an

extension of unemployment insurance for those who have already lost their jobs. We need to help those out of work and keep America working. Cuts to municipal budgets directly affect private sector activity and growth, particularly when infrastructure projects and capital expenditures are put on hold or cancelled, further impacting local employment, business contracts and overall investment in the economy.

Ongoing economic challenges underscore the critical need for direct federal aid to America's hometowns. Local leaders and economists have been warning about economic catastrophe for months. Current and former Federal Reserve chairs, including Jerome Powell, Ben Bernanke, and Treasury Secretary nominee Janet Yellen have all made clear that strained local budgets create a major drag on our nation's economic recovery and a failure to address these unprecedented shortfalls will only further stall our efforts to recover from the current downturn. The importance of local economies, local revenue and local employment on the national economy, national revenues and national employment cannot be overstated.

TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC RELIEF AND STABILITY TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, WE ASK CONGRESS AND THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO SUPPORT:

- \$500 billion in direct, flexible funding to every local government over the next two or more years – \$125 billion per year to municipalities.
- No population threshold for eligibility for funding.
- A fair and equitable allocation of funding to every local government, at levels appropriate to their needs, and with minimal additional burden to the states, is achievable without creating an entirely new administrative or regulatory framework by simply modifying the formula used to distribute the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).
 - This formula considers population alongside measures of poverty and housing instability and includes a set-aside for thousands of small and rural municipalities below 50,000 residents.
- Eligible expenditures that address a broad range of purposes, including public health, economic recovery, emergency payments on behalf of jeopardized residents, municipal budget revenue shortfalls because of closures due to coronavirus, and technical assistance to those ends.

Building Sustainable Infrastructure

Much of our nation's infrastructure needs repair, improvement and modernization to meet the demands of the 21st century. By investing strategically, we can ensure that America's infrastructure will support a stronger economy and withstand extreme weather events. To rebuild and reimagine our infrastructure, we ask the Biden-Harris Administration to:

- Partner with local governments to rebuild and fully fund the nation’s transportation network, better connect our regions, and innovate with technology and sustainable solutions.
- Provide grants, tools and resources to support local efforts to strengthen infrastructure and make communities safer and more resilient in the face of extreme weather events.
- Make the necessary investments to ensure that reliable, affordable broadband service is available to all Americans, including those in small and rural communities, while eliminating hurdles to local innovation.

Infrastructure investment is essential to moving America forward. Yet, much of our nation’s infrastructure needs to be repaired and modernized to meet today’s demands.

Local governments and states have stepped up over the past 10 years with more than \$3.8 trillion in municipal bonds to address their most pressing infrastructure needs. However, a \$2 trillion infrastructure funding gap remains for our nation’s transportation and water networks. This number does not reflect the costs of expanding broadband access, addressing climate change, and investing in workforce development and training programs. The costs of continued inaction are staggering. Strategic investments in our infrastructure will support a growing and strong economy.

Transportation

America’s transportation problems far exceed available funding and how we move as a country is changing. Increasingly clogged and potholed roads now host more traffic along with innovative ride-share services, “micro-mobility” options like shared bikes and scooters, rapid buses and more. Many necessary projects are also ineligible for federal support, creating clear divisions – 35% of non-interstate urban roads are in poor condition, compared to just 6% of the better supported urban interstates. Cities, towns and villages are investing in transportation from their own budgets and ballot initiatives, including innovative, sustainable solutions. The federal government must step up as an equal partner to leverage local investment, improve roads and increase safety.

TO IMPROVE OUR NATION’S TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Partner with local governments to rebuild and fully fund the nation’s transportation needs, better connect our regions, and innovate with technology and sustainable solutions.
- Work with local governments to expand and implement new revenue mechanisms that reflect the true cost of every mode of transportation, provide direct resources for regional priorities, and can grow with the country’s transportation network.

- Increase grant funding and flexibility to save the lives of riders, bikers and pedestrians through Road to Zero and safety projects.

Water

Much of the nation's water infrastructure was built in the post-World War II period—and some of it is more than 100 years old. It is no wonder there are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks across the country each year, according to the American Society for Civil Engineers. Adding to the challenge for local governments are new costly and complex federal mandates that are driving local water and sewer rates to levels that are unaffordable for many residents. Local government investments account for nearly 98% of all water and sewer infrastructure spending, including more than \$130 billion in 2018, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The federal government should recommit to being a significant partner in investing in our nation's water infrastructure.

TO IMPROVE OUR NATION'S WATER INFRASTRUCTURE, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Fully fund water infrastructure finance mechanisms, including the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), and support other mechanisms for financing infrastructure.
- Provide direct funding for local efforts to manage stormwater, improve system resiliency, address lead and other drinking water contaminants, promote water infrastructure related workforce development, and accelerate the use of innovative technologies.
- Support and promote policy solutions that provide flexibility to local governments in meeting environmental requirements, such as integrated planning, extended pollution discharge permits, and a revised affordability framework.

Broadband

Broadband is the infrastructure backbone of a modern economy. Demand for connectivity has only increased as jobs, education, healthcare, and government services shift online. However, too many households and communities remain unconnected, either because of inadequate infrastructure or unaffordable broadband subscription. Federal, state, and local broadband investments are currently hampered by insufficient data collection on broadband access. In addition to investing in better data, the federal government must empower local governments to invest in and regulate broadband service.

TO ENSURE THAT RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE BROADBAND SERVICE IS AVAILABLE TO ALL, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Expand broadband access in underserved communities by eliminating state barriers to municipal broadband networks.
- Increase the flexibility of federal programs within the Universal Service Fund to allow community anchor institutions to serve as springboards for wider broadband access within the community.
- Improve the quality of federal broadband maps to include a street-level understanding of broadband access, actual service speeds, and subscription costs.
- Empower communities to use their contracting, franchising, and oversight powers to prevent and prohibit digital redlining.

Community Resilience

Cities across the country are seeing the effects of climate change and are taking action to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events on their residents and businesses. With heat waves, droughts, wildland fires, heavy downpours, floods and hurricanes becoming more frequent and more severe, communities need to be able to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to these events. Extreme weather can cost local, state and federal governments trillions of dollars and severely impact local and regional infrastructure, the economy, public safety, public health, natural landscapes, environmental quality and national security.

TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND MODERNIZE OUR NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Take [urgent action](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across a broad sector of the economy, including transportation networks and energy production and consumption.
- Support local adaptation efforts, including vulnerability assessments and emergency management planning, to prepare cities and residents for climate impacts that may be unavoidable.
- Provide grants, tools and resources to support local efforts to strengthen infrastructure and make communities safer and more resilient in the face of extreme weather events.

Creating a Skilled Workforce

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation faced a skills shortage in many of the critical industries that support local economies. With increasing unemployment numbers combined with an underfunded federal workforce development system, investing in the American workforce is critical to protecting and expanding our nation's economic success and ensuring that all people have opportunities to thrive. The

answer is not simply job creation. We must invest in skills development that will equip the millions who are out of work, as well as those looking to advance their careers, with the skills they need to meet business demand. Investing in the American workforce is critical to expanding our nation's economic success and ensuring that all people have opportunities to thrive. The priorities: "re-skilling" those who are already in the workforce for new jobs in expanding and changing industries and providing access to careers for those looking to enter the workforce.

"Middle-skill" jobs, which require education beyond high school but not a four-year degree, make up the largest part of the labor market in the United States and in each of the 50 states. All too often, key industries are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs.¹ In all, 53% of jobs in today's labor market are middle-skill and only 43% of U.S. workers are trained at this level.²

Without a skilled and trained workforce, the nation's cities, towns and villages will face serious challenges when it comes to attracting and retaining businesses and staying economically competitive. According to federal government estimates, 4.6 million additional trained workers will be needed by 2022 to keep pace with current hiring needs in the infrastructure sector alone.³

The American people understand the importance and the urgency of this issue: 93% of voters support increasing investments in skills training.⁴

Because of the diversity of local economies, the federal government needs to empower local workforce solutions, streamline federal funding, and drive new resources to proven approaches in our communities.

TO ADVANCE WORKFORCE READINESS IN THE FACE OF CHANGING ECONOMIC FORCES AND TECHNOLOGY, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

Boost investment in and awareness of apprenticeship programs that provide a pathway to successful careers, including industry and sector partnerships and pre-apprenticeship programs for workers with barriers to employment.

- Registered apprenticeships have an 80-year history as an effective approach to meeting growing workforce needs and connecting workers to good jobs and careers. With increased funding and awareness in recent years,

¹ National Skills Coalition, *Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: State by State Snapshots*

² National Skills Coalition, "Skills for Good Jobs, Agenda 2019"

³ Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, *Advancing CTE in State and Local Career Pathways*

⁴ National Skills Coalition press release, *Likely 2020 Voters Overwhelmingly Support Increasing Investment in Skills Training*

apprenticeships continue to grow in number and expand into new and emerging industries including health, technology, finance and transportation.⁵

- Cities, towns and villages seek increased federal investment and commitment for these time-tested programs to address workforce needs across diverse American communities.

Expand Pell grants and other financial aid programs to cover needed workforce skills training, such as short-term programs leading to certificates.

- Many higher education and short-term certificate training programs are not covered by financial aid, but they are often the stepping-stone to workforce re-entry, a better job and a meaningful wage.⁶
- By expanding the Pell grant program, the federal government can ensure that more individuals gain access to critical training and education so they can access skilled jobs that remain unfilled in our communities. Workers need more support to respond to changes in technology that require updated skill sets.

Create new pathways to successful careers for unemployed and underemployed Americans through expanded investments in skills training and wraparound supports, such as childcare and transportation.

- By creating skills training and new pathways to middle-skill jobs for individuals facing barriers to employment, the Biden-Harris Administration can meet urgent employment gaps that exist across America's communities.
- Additional wraparound services like expanded childcare can be a game changer for individuals who might not otherwise be able to enter the workforce.

Ending Housing Instability and Homelessness

Housing costs continue to climb in diverse communities across the country, leaving millions of individuals and families without enough money for food, transportation and other basic needs. The growing imbalance of housing supply and demand is putting affordable housing and homeownership out of reach for too many, while undermining economic success at all levels. This crisis is overwhelming cities and service providers working at the intersection of mental health, substance use disorder and homelessness. Effective local responses require multi-sector partnerships and a strong federal partner.

⁵ Jobs for the Future, Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning

⁶ Center for Law and Social Policy, Short-Term Education and Training Programs as Part of a Career Pathway

Cities, towns and villages across the United States are facing a crisis in housing and homelessness. Housing instability is increasingly recognized as one of the biggest barriers to economic prosperity for American families.

Due to stagnant wages, rising real estate prices, strict lending standards and regulatory obstacles, housing has become an outsized cost for more and more families and individuals. Too many Americans are forgoing necessities just to pay rent or to make their monthly mortgage payment. And only one in four families eligible for federal housing assistance actually receives it.

For those who lose their housing—because of foreclosure, eviction, family emergency, health crisis, or countless other threats to housing stability—records of that loss will follow them for years and, unfortunately, put recovery out of reach for many. The housing crisis is driving homelessness to levels that are overwhelming local governments and service providers working at the intersection of mental health, substance use disorder and homelessness.

The time to end housing instability and homelessness is now. National polls show the public overwhelmingly supports greater federal investment in housing. Most Americans (85%) believe that ensuring all residents have safe, decent, affordable homes should be a “top national priority.” This view is strong across the political spectrum: 95% of Democrats agree it should be a top national priority, along with 87% of unaffiliated voters and 73% of Republicans. Eight in ten voters also say that both President-elect Biden and Congress should “take major action” to make housing more affordable for low-income households.⁷

Local leaders cannot do this work alone. All levels of government need to tackle the housing crisis head-on. The President must step up with a bold national agenda to end housing instability and homelessness—because a safe and stable home is the first step to a safe and stable life.

TO PROMOTE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING SOLUTIONS, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Ensure sufficient federal funding streams are in place, partnerships are enabled and encouraged, and federal funds are appropriated directly to the local level for mental health, drug treatment and other emergency services.
- Prevent homelessness by providing wraparound services, emergency assistance and crisis interventions for at-risk individuals and families before they face a crisis.

⁷ National Housing Survey, HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, Study #12590, February/March 2019

- Promote housing affordability by advancing new policies to stabilize and stem the loss of public and affordable housing, while authorizing new funding for pilot programs that advance housing for all.
- Improve housing opportunities for vulnerable populations, including senior citizens and individuals struggling with drug addiction, mental illness, or histories of incarceration.
- Fix inequities in housing development and the housing finance system to reverse decades of disinvestment and decline resulting from historically discriminatory public policies, and to close the racial homeownership gap.

Reducing Gun Violence

As local elected officials, we are charged with keeping our communities safe. Every day, 100 Americans die because of gun violence, and hundreds more are shot and injured. It is time for the nation’s elected leaders to work together at all levels to address this crisis by advancing commonsense solutions to protect our communities and our children while ensuring that law-abiding residents maintain their Second Amendment rights.

Gun ownership is a fundamental right guaranteed by the United States Constitution’s Second Amendment. With this right, however, we all have a great responsibility to keep communities safe from all types of gun violence.

In a survey conducted by the National League of Cities in August 2019, 73% of local government officials said they believe the U.S. is experiencing a gun violence epidemic. The percentage jumps to 89% for local government officials in cities with populations of more than 300,000.

Since 2010, fatalities because of gun violence in the U.S. have been steadily on the rise.⁸ According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading cause of “violence-related” injury deaths in the U.S. from 2010 to 2017 was a firearm.⁹

These numbers do not include the hundreds of thousands of people who were injured and survived a firearm-related incident, nor do they include the number of victims who lost family members because of gun violence.

Beyond the tragic human costs, the epidemic of gun violence in communities across the country is having a devastating impact on local economies. The estimated total lifetime medical and work-loss costs of firearm-related deaths to the American

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS, Fatal Injury Data, Fatal Injury Reports, National, Regional and State, 1981-2017

⁹ National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), National Vital Statistics System

economy easily exceeded \$360 billion between 2010 and 2017. This does not include the billions of dollars incurred by local governments in response to gun violence, such as police and emergency medical response, medical transport, hospital expenses, mental health and social services for victims and survivors, criminal investigations, legal and court expenses, and jail and incarceration costs.

Likewise, the rise in mass shootings is severely increasing local government costs associated with preparing for and responding to active-shooter incidents in schools, government buildings, and other locations, such as parks and community centers. Reducing gun violence in cities, towns, and villages requires a complex response that differs for each community. Whereas some cities may focus their efforts on keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, other jurisdictions may set out to provide more services to reduce suicides and domestic violence. Local governments need to have better access to data to identify the causes of gun violence in their communities and to determine what types of policies and services are required to address the problem properly.

It is time for the nation's elected leaders to work together to address this crisis by advancing common-sense solutions to protect our communities and our children, while ensuring that law-abiding residents maintain their Second Amendment rights.

TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE AND PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Convene a national commission on gun violence (including elected officials from all levels of government, victims' family members, survivors, gun advocates, law enforcement, and others) to offer recommendations.
- Advance legislation requiring fully federally funded and completed background checks for all gun sales and transfers, consistent with state and local laws.
- Enact federal legislation that would allow judges to issue extreme risk protection orders to reduce firearm-related suicides, murder-suicides, and domestic violence.
- Provide sufficient funding to the Centers for Disease Control to conduct comprehensive research to identify the underlying causes that lead to gun violence and mass shootings in communities.

Reimagining Public Health, Safety and Policing

In the aftermath of numerous police officer involved killings of Black Americans and other minorities, there is a growing movement calling for the defunding of municipal police departments across the country. The protests in many cities, towns and villages have become a rallying cry for local leaders to take a hard look at the way they

administer public health, safety, and policing services in their communities, especially in communities of color.

For more than three decades, community policing has expanded the role of traditional policing to include public health and safety services to residents, but are communities asking too much of their armed police officers. Does community policing place additional responsibilities on police officers that might be better suited for other responders who are specifically trained to deal with people in crises?

As a nation, we have an opportunity to re-imagine the way local, state, and the federal government support public health, safety, and policing programs. NLC is working with municipal leaders to find new innovative solutions to help people in crises. Local leaders have begun implementing programs that reduce the reliance on sending armed police officers to handle 9-1-1 calls for mental health, substance use disorder, vagrancy, truancy, homelessness, and other public health incidents.

TO HELP RE-IMAGINE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND POLICING SERVICES, WE ASK THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Ensure federal policy supports – not preempts – local governments’ authority to manage their public safety and policing programs.
- Provide increased federal funding to help local law enforcement agencies establish training and education programs on de-escalation techniques, crises intervention, appropriate use of force and enforcement techniques, explicit and implicit racial bias, and proper and unbiased investigative procedures.
- Provide federal resources to help municipalities of all sizes implement co-responder programs for public health incidents such as mental health crises, substance abuse, vagrancy, truancy, and homelessness.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to help local governments create violence interrupter programs.
- Support federal programs that provide mental health and wellness services to law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other emergency service personnel.
- Establish a National Database of Decertified Officers that local governments can use to vet officers who have been dismissed for such issues as excessive use of force or racial discrimination.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and Executive Order 13132: Federalism

The 1995 Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) requires federal agencies to assess the costs and benefits of a final rule that may result in the expenditure by state, local and tribal governments, in the aggregate, of \$100,000,000 or more. Under UMRA, this

threshold amount also triggers the required intergovernmental consultation process between regulatory agencies and elected officials.

In 1999, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13132: Federalism (Executive Order) to “further the policies of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act” and to “ensure that the principles of federalism established by the Framers guide the executive departments and agencies in the formulation and implementation of policies.” In addition to enumerating the basic principles of federalism, the Executive Order directed federal agencies to set up a consultation process “to ensure meaningful and timely input by State and local officials in the development of regulatory policies that have federalism implications.”

Under UMRA and the Executive Order, each federal agency adopted guidance for consulting with state and local governments on federal regulatory actions, but the consultation processes differ by agency, and as a result the Executive Order is applied inconsistently across the federal government.

As partners in the intergovernmental process and often serving as co-regulators, local leaders should be at the table when rules are being crafted to provide an important perspective on ensuring that rules are effective, implementable, offer local flexibility, avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach and avoid an unfunded mandate. *(Read more about the local government perspective and recommendations on how the federal government can reduce unfunded mandates and unnecessary regulatory burdens on local governments and how the Federalism consultation process can be improved in [Congressional testimony, April 26, 2017.](#))*

Appendix

City Fiscal Conditions 2020

In its 35th year, the [City Fiscal Conditions report](#) continues to provide insight into the fiscal health of cities, towns and villages from across the nation. The findings in this year’s report reveals that America’s cities are experiencing the fiscal consequences of the coronavirus pandemic-downturn at an unprecedented speed – and like recent recessions, it will take years for municipal budgets to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

State of the Cities 2020

For seven years, the National League of Cities has released a [State of the Cities report](#). This research, which examines mayoral state of the city speeches delivered January through April, has typically provided a clear and consistent voice about the current priorities of local leaders.

Homeward Bound: The Road to Affordable Housing

In 2019, the National League of Cities released a [comprehensive affordable housing report](#) focusing on the challenges and solutions communities large and small are using to address the nation's growing affordable housing crisis in cities. Reflecting the collaborative work of over 20 bipartisan community leaders on NLC's housing task force, the report offers several policy actions and a comprehensive overview of the history and factors behind the crisis, as well as case studies from cities launching innovative solutions and recommendations from experts.

A Prescription for Action: Local Leadership in Ending the Opioid Crisis

NLC has been at the forefront of efforts to combat the opioid crisis. In 2016, NLC and the National Association of Counties (NACo) launched the City-County National Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic, which released the report, [A Prescription for Action: Local Leadership in Ending the Opioid Crisis](#). The report provides recommendations for how local officials should address the opioid crisis and explores how cities and counties can strengthen collaboration with each other and state, federal, private-sector and non-profit partners.

City Officials Guide to Policing in the 21st Century

NLC published the [City Officials Guide to Policing in the 21st Century](#) to help inform local elected officials about the relevant recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and provide guidance on how they can work together with their city's law enforcement officials to implement the principles of community policing. The guide provides an executive overview of the key recommendations of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing report that relate directly to the management and oversight of policing functions.