

Remarks at a United States Conference of Mayors Reception
January 23, 2014

Thank you. Please have a seat.

The—well, welcome to the White House. It is great to have you. For those of you who have been here before, welcome back. I see a lot of friends and a lot of familiar faces around the room, but I've also already had a chance to meet some newly elected mayors. So to all of you, congratulations, and make sure you're shoveling the snow. [*Laughter*] I—just a little piece of advice. It's been cold.

We've got more than 250 mayors here from more than 45 States and Territories. You represent about 40 million Americans. And over the last 5 years, thanks in part to the partnerships that we've been able to forge with mayors in this room and across the country, we've accomplished some big things on behalf of the American people.

But you know as well as anybody that while our economy is growing stronger and we are optimistic about growth this year and in subsequent years, we've got a lot more work to do to make sure that everybody has a chance to get ahead. If they're willing to work hard and take responsibility, they've got to be able to participate in that growth. And every day, mayors are proving that you don't have to wait for the gridlock to clear in Congress in order to make things happen.

Now, Mayor Greg Stanton in Phoenix and Mayor Ralph Becker in Salt Lake City have ended chronic homelessness among veterans. In San Antonio, Mayor Castro has launched an early childhood education program designed to reach more than 22,000 4-year-olds over the next 8 years. In Fresno, Mayor Ashley Swearingin is spearheading projects to develop her city's downtown, including a high-speed rail station that's going to help attract jobs and businesses to the Central Valley. In Philadelphia, Mayor Nutter is helping young people reach higher during their summers by working with partners across the city to create thousands of summer jobs. In Tampa, Mayor Bob Buckhorn has gone, in his words, "all in," helping his constituents get covered with quality, affordable health insurance.

So mayors from both parties are a part of the climate task force, helping to make sure that cities have what it takes to withstand changes that may be taking place in our atmosphere in the years to come. More than a thousand mayors across America have signed agreements to cut dangerous carbon pollutions. I want to work with Congress whenever and wherever I can, but the one thing I'm emphasizing to all my Cabinet members is, we're not going to wait. Where Congress is debating things and hasn't been able to pull the trigger on stuff, my administration is going to move forward and we're going to do it in partnership with all of you. I've got a pen, and I've got a phone. And that's all I need.

Because with a pen, I can take executive actions. With a phone, I can rally folks from around the country to help grow the economy and restore opportunity. And that's what today, hopefully, has been about. You've met with members of the administration. You've gotten to know each other, but also, hopefully, they've given you some insight into where we see the most promising programs, things that are working, best practices. And we want to cooperate and coordinate with you as effectively as we can to make sure that whatever works is getting

out there and hitting the streets and actually having an impact on people's lives. And frankly, there are a lot of things that folks in this town could learn from all of you.

And I want to close by personally saying how much it means to me to have you here today. As Joe mentioned, I know a little something about cities. I got my professional career started as somebody working in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Chicago. But I also saw how hard work can transform communities block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood. And to see the resilience and the strength of people and the incredible vibrancy that cities bring to not just those who live within the boundaries of cities, but to entire regions, that's what you understand. And I want to make sure that I've got your back in everything that you do.

So I want to say thank you to all of you for making sure that your constituents are well served, but as a consequence, America is well served.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden, who introduced the President.

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