

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

STATEMENT OF

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ON BEHALF OF

THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
AND
THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

BEFORE THE
THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS (PLATFORM)

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Fontainebleau Hotel
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It is significant that we meet today in Miami on the eve of the 1972 Republican National Convention. Four years ago in this city, the Republican Party nominated Richard Nixon for President of the United States. It is important to review this country's commitment to human resources four years ago and compare that record with accomplishments of President Nixon.

Four years ago, a Democratic Administration boasted of its commitment to the human needs of our citizens. That boast was backed by a commitment of 32 percent of the national budget for domestic spending. There was no boasting of the 45 percent for defense spending.

Today, these figures have been reversed. The Nixon Administration is now spending 45 percent of our national resources for human needs. Funding in this area has been increased from \$57 billion to \$111 billion. Defense spending has been cut and the Republican Party has begun to meet its commitment to the people of America.

The Republican Party has recognized that within the urban environment there must be channelled for individual development, expression and involvement which enable every person to apply his innate talents to the fullest possible extent and to contribute in his own way to the welfare of his community.

This Party and this Administration must continually renew its dedication to the goal that every American shall have the opportunity for education and training and the opportunity to work and live in comfort and decency.

We must reaffirm our commitment to the goals of immediate reduction and eventual elimination of poverty, racism and discrimination in this country.

Let us look at some of the unmet domestic needs of our country and see what has been done and what we must do for the future.

The Republican Party committed itself four years ago to the reduction of crime in this nation. Nowhere but in the cities of America is this problem more acutely felt; and no one more than the minority peoples of this country have suffered from the ravages of crime. For years citizens have fled the inner cities and crime was always one of the chief reasons.

The Nixon Administration has moved forward with the pledge of the Republican Party. Federal assistance for crime prevention and control has increased almost five-fold since 1968.

This Administration has demonstrated a constructive and positive approach to the problems of crime and violence through the planning and support represented by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the criminal justice planning system. But the quality of federal and local performance in this area must be improved.

For the next four years, we urge streamlining this system to eliminate the uncertain and often mis-directed flow of assistance. We urge that more planning control be placed with the local government and that more funding be directed to the local level through the Safe Streets Act and through direct bloc grants. The fight against urban crime must be carried on in every city and not just the State Capitol.

The problems of drug abuse again fall most heavily on the cities. Drug abuse is a symptom of underlying social and community ills and one of the chief causes of urban crime.

President Nixon has moved forcefully on this critical problem and federal funding has increased nine hundred percent since 1969. We are also familiar

with the Administration's efforts to stem the flow of narcotics from foreign sources.

An effort has been started and I believe that progress against this evil traffic is being made. However, to assist the cities in dealing more effectively with drug abuse, we suggest closer cooperation between local and federal officials to determine the needs, devise the methods and operation of the programs; but without interference from the federal government in detailing the shape of local programs.

We propose escalated law enforcement effort, continued development of educational projects and increased assistance for drug rehabilitation programs that have proven themselves effective in gaining the confidence and participation of drug abusers.

In 1971, the Nixon Administration implemented a program which provided more than 140,000 Americans with meaningful employment. These previously unemployed Americans included the disadvantaged Vietnam veterans and those who were unemployed because their technical skills were related to aerospace and defense industries.

The Emergency Employment Act and its public employment program enabled hard-pressed cities such as Grand Rapids to relieve the unemployment strain and increase municipal services. (I might add that this assistance has been crucial to my city's efforts in maintaining service levels in the face of large deficits.)

This effort is to be applauded and now should be expanded. The broadening of the public employment program would respond to the needs of the chronically unemployed, increase city services, aid areas of especially high unemployment and stimulate the economy.

We urge that federal manpower programs be streamlined through the President's Manpower Revenue Sharing proposal and that any manpower reform

legislation mandate local prime sponsorship. By channeling federal assistance to local agencies through the central cities, which would act as prime sponsors, considerable progress can be made in program coordination and performance evaluation.

Some of the greatest impediments to the elimination of poverty in America are, ironically, the very programs which were designed to do just that -- eliminate poverty. America is tangled in a web of welfare and poverty bureaucracy and we must extricate ourselves.

President Nixon has proposed a badly needed welfare reform measure -- H.R. 1 -- which has been bottled up in Congress. This reform is long needed and we urge the support and passage of President Nixon's Family Assistance Program. We believe that it is essential to maintain uniform national standards and federal administration of the welfare program. However, I wish to caution that payments to the recipients of aid in the Family Assistance Program must be adequate to meet the cost of a decent and reasonable standard of living. The cycle of poverty will not be broken by yet another program which is designed to keep the poor at a permanent economic and social disadvantage.

Briefly stated, our position on health care is one that urges the Republican Party and this Administration to support a national health program which is comprehensive in scope and available to all citizens.

We note with satisfaction that the Nixon Administration has provided funds for nearly one million Neighborhood Youth Corps jobs this summer. In addition, \$50 million (more than double last year's allocation) has been provided in the Special Food Service Program this summer. I might add that Grand Rapids has made effective use of this funding.

We urge that this support be continued and that additional financial assistance be made available to those cities which demonstrate the ability to use these funds effectively in well-managed programs.

I have saved for last the remarks I would like to offer on the needs of the elderly and the opportunity for new directions in meeting those needs that is available to the Congress and the Administration.

These remarks come last, but only for purposes of special emphasis. The needs of the elderly are very real and personally moving to me and to other Mayors across this nation, I am sure.

Over twenty-five percent of the elderly of our nation are caught up in poverty. Problems of health care, housing, mobility and isolation pervade the daily lives of a large segment of our urban elderly community, whose only mistake is growing old in a society oriented to youth. We urge that bills now under consideration in the Senate, that would amend and extend the Older Americans Act, be passed now. We urge that these amendments provide for comprehensive services under Title III of that act and that city governments be given the option of taking the major role in planning local programs and administering them under prime sponsorship arrangements.

Last November, the White House Conference on the Aging and all of the preparatory meetings at the local level finally put the spotlight of national attention on a public issue too long ignored. The Administration is to be applauded for its efforts and I strongly urge that this Committee support those proposals and policies related to housing, health, transportation, income and social services that pay particular attention to the special needs of the aging.

In summary, I would strong urge that the Republican Party hold to its

present course in redirecting authority and responsibility back to local governments to meet the human needs of our urban centers. Moreover, I would also urge that special attention be directed at improving the capacity of federal, state and local governments to administer effectively the human resource programs now in existence. This should be accomplished through bloc grants designed to speed services instead of categorical programs that are too often administered in ways calculated to slow services. In addition, an incentive program for local governments which demonstrates effective management of human resource programs should be established that would reward such cities with more funding opportunities.

Finally, I would again point out that welfare reform must be designed to give recipients a reasonable freedom of choice in how they will live. Public assistance allotments must not be geared so low that dependency on government services and private charity will be perpetuated.

The problems of our central cities will be truly solved when we can finally come to grips with the human problems of want and hunger, idleness and crime, disease and ignorance. We ask that these human needs be given the highest priority in the Republican Party Platform.