

**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**



**UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

STATEMENT OF

MAYOR HARRY G. HASKELL, JR.  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

ON BEHALF OF

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES  
AND  
UNITED STATES CONFERENCES OF MAYORS

BEFORE THE

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION COMMITTEE ON RESOLUTIONS (PLATFORM)

La Ronde Room  
Fontainebleau Hotel  
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I appear before this Platform Committee as Chairman of a group of fellow mayors on behalf of the 15,000 cities represented by the National League of Cities and the United States Conference of Mayors. Our purpose is to focus your attention for a few brief moments on one of our nation's most critical priorities -- the strengthening of our cities and the endorsement of the quality of life for over 70 percent of our population who have chosen to live in cities.

We Republican Mayors, we who appear before you today, can point with pride to a Republican National Administration that has brought new vitality to our cities because of the imagination, understanding and leadership of a great President.

Four years ago our cities were just months removed from violent disturbances that grew out of years of frustration. People were convinced that their governments were incapable of understanding or of compassion. As Mayors, we had expressed concern but were answered by an ever-increasing number of unrelated, cumbersome, confusing and underfinanced federally dictated programs that promised relief and that heightened expectations but produced only increased frustration.

President Nixon wisely sensed the need for new national policies. Shortly after his election, the President described to the American people his ideas for a "New Federalism". The President said "Washington will no longer try to go at it alone...(and) will refrain from telling states and localities how to conduct their affairs."

The President proposed to rechannel "power funds, and authority... increasingly to those governments closest to the people".

This was a monumental commitment by the President. To fulfill that commitment, the President has proposed or established:

- general revenue sharing to strengthen the financial base of local governments;
- special revenue sharing to restructure and consolidate the vast range of categorical programs;
- a realignment of the federal executive agencies to make them more supportive of program objectives;
- a Domestic Affairs Council to begin a long overdue coordination of federal policies and programs; and
- an Office of Intergovernmental Relations in the Office of the Vice President to act as a point of direct access for cities to the highest levels of national policy-making in administration.

We Mayors believe that city governments are responsive and adaptive institutions capable of revitalizing city life. But cities cannot do it alone. This Republican Administration under the competent leadership of President Nixon has begun to organize and deliver the support we Mayors need to bring new hope and new inspiration to our cities.

We are confident that this Platform Committee and the Delegates to this convention will adopt a platform which supports continuation of the initiatives of the President and expands those initiatives into new arenas of needed national action. We are confident the American people will support such a platform and President Nixon in November.

As we seek to formulate national policies for an urban society, the focal point must be the city. Past history is strewn with ill-fated attempts to administer to the needs of people through special local institutions created by and responsible to the federal bureaucracy. Counsellor to the President Pat Moynihan called them "para-governments". It is, in the final analysis, the city which must be looked to.

The city is different today. Fifteen years ago, city government was mainly responsible for public safety, sanitation, and the construction and maintenance of public facilities.

Governing a city today involves those traditional functions, but is also involved with new responsibilities for slum clearance,

housing, relocation, urban redevelopment, drug abuse control, manpower programs, pollution abatement, and education.

A city government must deal with expanding needs for child care, recreation, social planning, consumer protection, veterans affairs, care of the elderly, transportation, health, welfare and social services.

The Mayor and his city government must deal effectively with all these issues. But they cannot do it alone. They need:

- adequate resources from the states and the federal government in addition to available local resources.
- adequate authority and flexibility to design and to carry out needed new programs.
- support from the citizens, from the private sector, and from the state and federal governments -- to help them respond to the demands placed on them.
- commitment to build on the best in our cities for the benefit of the great majority of our people.

The city today is a complex system. Its problems are not susceptible to patent medicine remedies. National prescriptions often result in consequences not anticipated and the reversal of federal policies is so slow that the direction assumes disasterous proportions before a new course can be devised.

Thus it is that the President's increased reliance on local decisions and prescriptions is sound. But local decisions can no longer be implemented with local resources alone.

The cities of America depend on the property tax for their basic revenue. Very few cities can sustain their basic services any longer on this regressive and relatively declining tax. In most cases, the state legislatures will not provide any other meaningful base, and if they do, it is too little and too late.

My own city of Wilmington, like other cities, receives no taxes from churches, hospitals, schools and government buildings that serve the entire region. Thirty percent of Wilmington property falls in this category. Half of Boston is untaxable. The other half is taxed at one of the highest rates in the country. Other city governments are sinking under the same burdens.

As a mayor and former member of Congress, I can say that an essential part of this Party's commitment must be a pledge in its Platform to support full funding of urban programs.

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Behind all the strategies for the renewal, redevelopment and revitalization of the cities lies the question of people. After all the primary mission of city government is to help people satisfy their social, cultural and economic needs.

While cities have historically been the national center of culture, education, opportunity and wealth, they have also been the dwelling place of the poor, racial minorities, the very young, the elderly -- all concentrated in the city because cities have offered a wide range of opportunity to find associates with common backgrounds, new careers and new life styles.

In recent years urban areas have continued to serve this function but many cities, especially the central cities, have been abandoned by the wealthy and have been left only with the poor and their associated problems and needs.

Cities have sought on their own to exercise strategies to increase their local tax base by annexation, urban renewal and economic development, first, to provide jobs, which translate into higher incomes for the citizens of the city and second, to provide increased revenues so the city government can finance necessary services. Physical development strategies to provide adequate housing and public facilities have been concerned with



improving the quality of life for the people who reside there.

It does not follow that cities are no longer viable institutions and that consequently federal resources should be shifted to other areas which might show a better return for the dollar.

The problems of the city and its citizens must be met head on. Our national investment must be commensurate with the level of neglect we are trying to erase. Society's commitment must become equal to the social injustice we are trying to overcome. We must be willing as a nation to accept the hard fact that there are no easy solutions.

As Mayors we know as well or better than any one else the difficulty of the task we face. Yet we know that the stakes are so high for the millions of people who look to the city as a way of life, and for those who have invested vast sums in public and private facilities that write-off the city as a lost cause would be self-destructive.

Today we will discuss with you some of the problems which we feel must continue to be addressed by the Republican Party. We will discuss the needs of efficient and effective urban management. We will speak of the priorities for physical development and for human development. And most importantly, we will press the issue of the urban revenue base, without which cities will not have the resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

Finally, we will express again our confidence in the President's programs for helping the cities. His actions on behalf of America's cities have been consistent with his stated policies.

We hope that the Republican Platform will tell the American people that President Nixon is right in his concept of a "New Federalism". We hope that the Platform will strongly endorse his plea to restore to local government its proper place in the Federal system. We urge that you provide strong support for those Presidential initiatives such as revenue sharing, which give credence to the announced policies.