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US Mayors Raise Concerns Over Threats to Municipal Bonds.

US mayors have reiterated the importance of federal infrastructure investment and their concerns over the threat of municipal bonds losing their tax-exempt status, as Donald Trump takes office.

Three hundred mayors gathered in Washington DC at the US Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting with some using the platform to express their fears that the new administration will remove the exemption on one of the most important tools for funding infrastructure.

“We are fighting to protect [the tax exemption] so that we can build schools, roads, hospitals and protect jobs without costing middle-class taxpayers billions of dollars that they cannot afford,” said Steve Benjamin, Mayor of Columbia, and Second Vice President of the US Conference of Mayors.

Other concerns discussed over the three days of the conference included immigration reform, policing, and the repeal of the Affordable Healthcare Act, otherwise known as Obamacare.

Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans and Vice President of the US Conference of Mayors, spoke out against any new plans for immigration reform that would force cities to become a “deportation force for federal government”.

“Everyone is welcome in our cities–they are not the dark foreboding places that people have talked about,” said Landrieu. “The President-elect paints with too broad a brush.”

Playing on Trump’s campaign slogan, Landrieu added: “Investment needs to take place in policing for safety and infrastructure for jobs. We need to make America safe again.”

But while the mayors are keen to air their views on what works best for US cities, they are looking to establish consensus with the new administration. Last month, Mick Cornett, Mayor of Oklahoma City and President of the US Conference of Mayors, took comfort in the fact that President-elect Trump expressed his support for continuing the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds when they met in Trump Tower.

Mike Pence, the Vice President-elect of the US joined a lunch meeting this week, the first time a Vice President-elect has attended a US Conference of Mayors meeting before being sworn in.

Although short on detail, Pence emphasised the importance of infrastructure, public safety and education.

“This administration is going to be a friend to America’s mayors,” he added saying that he and “Donald Trump are going to work in partnership with city halls all across America”.

Earlier Cornett had added that relations with the incoming Trump administration were “so far so good” and paid tribute to treatment received from the outgoing Obama administration over the past eight years.

“Although many of us mayors may differ on some of the policies of the administration we had good

access to the executive branch and we were treated well and respected.”

CitiesToday

by Jonathan Andrews

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