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National League of Cities Pushes for Federal Government to Invest in Infrastructure.

Mayor Muriel Bowser and over 2000 municipal leaders met this week during the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional City Conference held this week in Washington. Bowser, who is chair of the NLC's Housing Taskforce, pushed for federal corporation in improving infrastructure and housing for all.

"Washington D.C. is a growing city. We're 700,000 people strong with a strong local economy- in fact one of the strongest in the region," Bowser said during a press conference. "With our growth and prosperity we have developed other problems, where we have an expanding income gap, opportunity gap and in some cases achievement gap for our young people."

"So at this year's conference, cities and jurisdictions of all sizes, people from both side of the ideological spectrum are here today to focus on the big issues that affect us. Mayors will frequently say 'there's no Democrat or Republican way to pick up the trash.'

"Infrastructure will put American's back to work. Infrastructure will offer good paying jobs and infrastructure will allow us to compete region to region, nation to nation across the globe. This is the focus that we have had in the NLC housing task force," the District of Columbia mayor said.

Bowser touched on some specific issues around infrastructure and housing saying, "We still have housing pressures big and small. We know that the demand on housing, like housing shortages have to be met, and we also know that cities that seamingly have nothing in common sadly have homelessness in common."

The NLC has a robust agenda for federal government including:

- Act as a champion for tax-exempt municipal bonds, the primary financing mechanism for state and local infrastructure projects. Any policy to alter the tax-exempt status of these bonds will cost local governments billions of dollars and prevent many projects from going forward;
- Support adequate and reliable long-term funding for infrastructure reflecting local needs and priorities;
- Support a vibrant web of connected transportation options — from transit and air to railways, roads, and waterways — as a means to reduce congestion, protect the environment, and stimulate economic development;
- Encourage and promote deployment of broadband networks in a competitive and technologically neutral manner, while preserving local authority to take action to ensure that residents have access to high-speed Internet and other communications services.

"Having safe and reliable infrastructure is a priority of every single leader because all communities will benefit from reliable water infrastructure, great streets and highways, a trained workforce and broadband infrastructure no matter where you live, said Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson of Gary, Ind. and president of the National League of Cities.

“Investing in our infrastructure and investing in the people who can build our infrastructure should be one of the most single most priorities of government at every level. So as local leaders were are here this week calling on our federal government to rebuild with us,” Freeman-Wilson said.

“We understand that no branch of government can do it alone,” the NLC president added.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, federal, state and local governments spent $441 billion on infrastructure in 2017, ranging from aviation, water transportation, water resources and highways. The bulk of the funds, $177 billion, went to highways, water utilities and mass transit and rail according to a summary report.

By AFRO Staff – March 15, 2019

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