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Benjamin, Brainard, and Biskupski Tout Climate Actions, Want Renewed Funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG).

Conference President Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin, joined by Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard and Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski, discussed their local climate strategies before a key House Subcommittee yesterday afternoon, urging the panel Members and Congress broadly to invest in city and other local government efforts as part of a national response to our changing climate.

The Conference leaders each called for new funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program, a Conference of Mayor-led initiative that received a one-time $2.8 billion commitment as part of the ARRA recovery package, helping further stimulate local action to curb greenhouse gases and move our cities toward a cleaner energy future.

Brainard who serves as the Co-Chair of USCM's Energy Independence and Climate Protection Task Force and Biskupski who serves as the Chair of the USCM's Alliance for a Sustainable Future testified with Benjamin before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment & Climate Change at the hearing, entitled "Learning from Across the Nation: State & Local Action to Combat Climate Change." Congressman Tonko, who chairs this subcommittee, is an energy and climate expert in his own right, having previously directed New York State's well-known energy agency, NYSERDA. As a Congressman, he represents Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy and Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, both leaders on energy and climate.

In his remarks, Benjamin told the panel that "climate change is the biggest issue we face" and that "climate change is already impacting our infrastructure." Brainard used his remarks to challenge his Republican party colleagues to return to earlier values and leadership on the environment and work with Democrats to address climate protection. Discussing how her region's poor air quality has forged a bipartisan consensus for action, Biskupski explained how this has helped drive a move toward renewable energy and transportation solutions to address air pollution and reduce public health threats to people.

The mayors' statements — Benjamin, Brainard and Biskupski — before the House panel tell the story of continuing mayoral leadership on climate protection. The accumulating local record of accomplishment and innovation has largely defined the national response to our nation's climate challenges in light of federal inaction. Their efforts are part of a larger campaign by the Conference to secure increased federal investment in energy infrastructure and initiatives. Refunding the EECBG Program is one key component of our 5-Point Infrastructure Agenda. Conference Membership Chairman Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler is leading a statewide effort in New Jersey to support House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone's efforts to elevate EECBG as a priority.

We thank them for their commitment of time and energy to this effort, as we press forward on these issues in this new Congress. The day is coming when Congress will invest in cities to help show that locally there are climate solutions are at hand.

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