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I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens. Let me especially mention the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years.

Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. ~~Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. These guidelines and our vaccine initiative bring us closer to our ultimate goals: to find a cure for those with HIV and to bring a permanent end to this epidemic.~~

To realize our goal of effective

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality.

We have started to change that, and six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America. This initiative will combine forthright dialogue, serious study, and real action. And nowhere is the challenge to build One America more pronounced than in our cities -- the gateways to our nation. So we are counting on every one of you to join us, to step forward and share with us what you know, show us what works, and help ensure that we meet this great national challenge.

We will also continue work to provide the best possible treatment & services to those who are already infected. It is vital that we identify sound PH strategies that enable local communities to address the HIV & substance abuse. We will continue work to stem the spread of HIV to those who are already infected.

Draft 6/19/97

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS SPEECH
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23, 1997

Acknowledgments: Sec. Cuomo; Mayor Daley; Mayor Willie Brown

I want to congratulate the Conference of Mayors for choosing San Francisco as the site for this year's meeting. **SAN FRANCISCO STUFF**

cities
We are here today to talk about the vitally important role our cities will play as we prepare our country to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Working together, we have strengthened our families and our communities, and we have begun to turn back the tide of violent crime that threatens too many of our cities. Our strategy of more police, tougher punishments and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11 percent in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco are experiencing dramatic declines in their crime rates. And the Brady Bill, which you fought so hard with us to pass, has been critical to our success.

difficult almost with
[This morning, I was disappointed to learn that the Supreme Court ruled part of the Brady Law unconstitutional. But let me be clear: Today's ruling should not mean an end to the background checks that have kept 186,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns. Twenty-seven states including California ~~now more than when the Brady Law first passed~~ -- now conduct background checks as a matter of state law and will continue to do so. And today, I have instructed Attorney General Reno and Treasury Secretary Rubin to make sure police departments across the country know that they can keep conducting Brady background checks voluntarily.]

basis
Our goal is clear: No background check, no handgun. And I urge all of you to continue to do everything in your power to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals and to keep our communities safe.

Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans and millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. The Industrial Revolution saw our cities become the engine of the economic progress and cultural achievement that defined the American century. ~~And~~ today, one in every four Americans lives in a city of more than 100,000 people. Those cities and the suburbs around them are home to almost 80% of the American people, and they contain close to 85% of America's jobs.

Why? Because cities matter
Cities have always mattered, and in the information age and the global economy of the 21st century they will matter more than ever before. That is why we must do everything we can to

Draft 6/20/97 9:00pm

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23, 1997**

Acknowledgments: Sec. Cuomo; Sec. Herman; Sec. Slater; Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Zoe Lofgren; Mayor Daley; Mayor Willie Brown; Mayor Helmke; Tom Cochran. *Announce intention to nominate Sol Ramirez, mayor of Laredo Texas, to be Assistant Secretary of HUD for Community Planning and Development.*

I want to congratulate the Conference of Mayors for choosing San Francisco as the site for this year's meeting. It isn't very hard to see why year after year, San Francisco is one of the world's most visited cities. From the Moscone Center to 3Com Park, from Twin Peaks to Coit Tower, from its thriving waterfront to its stunning coastline, San Francisco is a great city in a nation of great cities.

I want to talk to you today about the vitally important role all of our nation's cities will play as we prepare our country to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans, and for millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. Our cities have always been symbols of the economic progress and cultural achievement that has made America the envy of the world.

Today, our cities are still centers of commerce and culture, science and technology, education and the arts. New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy to many of our largest urban centers. Our cities and the suburbs around them are home to almost 80% of the American people, and they contain close to 85% of America's jobs.

Now, at the dawn of a new century, we must make sure that our cities are the engines of opportunity and progress that will drive our success in the global economy of the 21st century. And the key is empowerment -- giving cities and citizens the tools they need to succeed.

[Over the last four-and-a-half years, we have worked together to revitalize our cities. One of the things we should be most proud of is the progress we have made in turning back the tide of violent crime that threatens too many of our cities. Our strategy of more police, tougher punishments and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11 percent in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.]

[The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our

success. This morning, the Supreme Court ruled part of the Brady Law unconstitutional. I am deeply disappointed by the Court's decision. But let me be clear: Today's ruling should not mean an end to the background checks that are helping keep our streets safe. Twenty-seven states, including California, now conduct background checks as a matter of state law and will continue to do so. Today, I have instructed Attorney General Reno and Treasury Secretary Rubin to make sure police departments across the country know that they can keep conducting Brady background checks on a voluntary basis.

[Our goal is clear: No background check, no handgun. And I will continue to do everything in my power to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals and to keep our cities safe.]

OR [The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court upheld the Brady Law. This is a victory for all Americans.]

Safe streets are only one part of our strategy to make our cities thrive. We must create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there. Our economic strategy is simple: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade. It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people ~~could~~ benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income equality since the 1960s. We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than \$70 billion this year. And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

[The Supreme Court's decision today to strike down the line item veto deprives the President of a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It will make the job of balancing the budget more difficult, but it will not deter us from that goal].

OR [The Supreme Court's decision today to uphold the line item veto gives the President a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It is a victory for all Americans.]

America's cities reflect the progress we have made in the last four and a half years. Today, Secretary Cuomo ~~has~~ released a "Report on the State of American Cities" that documents the real progress our cities have made, but also identifies the real problems that we still face. It lays out a comprehensive urban agenda that will empower citizens and local governments to meet their challenges and bring our cities into the 21st century, stronger than ever.

Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are empowering communities and people to work with us as they solve their own problems. This strategy is working. As Secretary Cuomo's report makes clear, after decades of decline, the last four years have shown the first real economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming.

move to top There is much to be proud of -- but there is much to do. *also* America has produced more than 12 million jobs in the last 4-1/2 years, but more and more of those jobs are being created in the suburbs, not in our cities. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people in our cities are struggling to move from welfare to work. And our cities are still a gateway to opportunity for new waves of immigrants all in need of jobs. Meanwhile, the migration of middle class families of all races from cities to suburbs continues.

The first thing we must do to make sure that our cities can overcome these problems is give them the tools to attract businesses and jobs. We have already created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities -- providing a powerful combination of tax incentives and freedom from government red tape -- to leverage the power of the private sector, and create jobs and opportunity where both have been absent for too long.

Our Community Development Financial Institutions initiative is infusing our cities with the capital that entrepreneurs need to start new businesses, expand existing ones, and create jobs. And our Brownfields National Partnership is creating jobs and attracting new businesses by cleaning up contaminated sites that were the shame of our cities and converting them into productive assets.

The historic bipartisan budget agreement we reached with Congress last month expanded Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities. But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this deal. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to the health of your cities.

The second thing we must do to revitalize our cities is create jobs for the one million people who we have pledged to move from welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources they need to help get and keep good jobs. I also fought for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare recipients.

I am very pleased that working together with Members of Congress of both parties, we have made sure that funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many

welfare recipients live. I am also pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by the rules, and I strongly urge the Congress not to renege on any part of this deal.

The third thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities. Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. So far, our successful economic strategy has helped 2.5 million people across America to become new homeowners. But, not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy in our central cities, bringing the total reduction in closing costs to \$1400. This could make all the difference to a family struggling to escape the spiral of renting.

And there is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. Many of the hard-working families who receive Section 8 rental assistance are ready to assume the responsibility of owning their own homes . . . and they deserve a chance to do it. There is now bipartisan legislation before Congress to allow many of those families to use their Section 8 vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this important initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Fourth, we have made remarkable progress in reducing crime and restoring peace and security to our cities. *[IF NO BRADY ANNOUNCEMENT: Our strategy of more police, tougher punishments and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11 percent in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates].*

You and I know that community policing and our efforts to fight violent youth gangs have been critical to our success. That is why we are moving forward toward our goal of putting 100,000 new police officers on our streets. And that is why I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

The "every day" presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, we will offer law enforcement officers in designated areas a 50% discount on 2,000 HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

City

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our cities schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world. That is why I made education my number one priority. But one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe ~~that~~ city schools are doing a good enough job. We have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards -- and our cities' schools are no exception. Each of us has an obligation to help our children reach those standards. That is why cities must have the flexibility to close down schools that aren't meeting those standards.

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am strong supporter of public education, but I do not think ~~that~~ we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Finally, we must do more to deal with the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years. Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. People with HIV and AIDS deserve the best possible care: this guide will help them get it. *These guidelines and our vaccine introduction bring us closer to our ultimate goal: to find a cure for those with HIV and to bring a permanent end to this epidemic.*

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. For 4-1/2 years, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has been your partner as we have worked to make our cities better and brighter than they have ever been. But it wasn't always that way. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol for overblown democracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality. We changed all that -- and we are not through yet.

Six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed a plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. And I know that he will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Economic empowerment, jobs for all who can work, citizen involvement in fighting crime, good schools, homeownership -- these are the best ways to create equal opportunity and a sense of community. And they are key to our mission of creating One America in the 21st century.

America's cities are clearly at a crossroads. If we do nothing, they will surely fall into decline and despair. But if we act with vision and courage, we will make them flourishing examples of America at its best. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. That is why I am pleased by today's Supreme Court decision upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to escape religious persecution and secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation assures that the religious liberties of all Americans will be strongly protected.] or...

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. Today the United States Supreme Court held part of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act unconstitutional. We will study that opinion closely. Religious freedom is central to the American system of liberty. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation reaffirmed that right. Although we are disappointed by the Supreme Court's ruling, we will continue to work to protect religious liberty to the fullest extent the Constitution allows.]

In this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share. It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together. You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Draft 6/21/97 4pm

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23, 1997**

Acknowledgments: Sec. Cuomo; Sec. Herman; Sec. Slater; Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Zoe Lofgren; Mayor Daley; Mayor Willie Brown; Mayor Helmke; Tom Cochran. *[Announce intention to nominate Sol Ramierez, mayor of Laredo Texas, to succeed Secretary Cuomo as Assistant Secretary of HUD for Community Planning and Development.]*

This is the [x]th time I have had the pleasure of speaking to the Conference of Mayors. And it is clearer than ever that our cities are at a crossroads -- that, thanks to the visionary, hands on leadership of so many of you, America's cities have turned a corner and are prepared to play the central role in our society in the next century that they have in this century. Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans, and for millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. Our cities have always been symbols of the economic progress and cultural achievement that have made America the envy of the world. That can be more than our history: you are making it our present, and it can be our future as well.

For far too long, many Americans wondered if our cities were in permanent decline, battered by seemingly inexorable economic dislocation, seemingly unstoppable waves of crime, seemingly intractable problems of poverty and inner-city decay. Today, America's cities are back. Today, Secretary Cuomo released a compelling "Report on America's Cities." We are seeing the first economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming. We are taking back our streets from the worst ravages of crime. New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. And dozens of mayors have changed the way city governments serve the people, providing services with less cost, less bureaucracy, fewer rules and regulations.

Now, we have a choice. We as a nation can continue that progress -- or let it slip from our grasp. New times bring new challenges: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence. We have made so much progress, but if we do not act now, we could look upon this time not as the beginning of a renaissance for America's cities, but a missed opportunity.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflected a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It was different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending that sought to pave over the problems with billions of dollars and billions of tons of concrete. And it was just as different from the new philosophy that would tell our cities and those who live in them: "You're on your own." Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems. The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

And this must be the approach we take as we press forward with our urban strategy. First, doing more to take back our streets from crime. Second, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America. Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

Let me begin by talking about crime. Everyone here knows that safe streets are a precondition for every other thing we must do. So we must continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to reduce crime and restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets. I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by "empowerment." The "every day" presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for up to 2,000 police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our

neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

[IF BRADY BILL RULING: *And we cannot turn back in our campaign to take guns off our streets. The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court ruled part of the Brady Law unconstitutional. I am deeply disappointed by the Court's decision. But let me be clear: Today's ruling should not mean an end to the background checks that are helping keep our streets safe. Twenty-seven states, including California, now conduct background checks as a matter of state law and will continue to do so. Today, I have instructed Attorney General Reno and Treasury Secretary Rubin to make sure police departments across the country know that they can keep conducting Brady background checks on a voluntary basis.*

[Our goal is clear: No background check, no handgun. And I will continue to do everything in my power to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals and to keep our cities safe.]

OR [The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court upheld the Brady Law. This is a victory for all Americans.]

The second thing we must do is to create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there.

Our national economic strategy is this: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade. It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people can benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s. We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than \$70 billion this year. And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

[Let me say one thing about how we will balance the budget. The Supreme Court's decision today to strike down the line item veto deprives the President of a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It will make the job of balancing the budget more difficult, but it will not deter us from that goal].

OR [The Supreme Court's decision today to uphold the line item veto gives the President a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It is a victory for all Americans.]

There is much to be proud of -- but there is also much to do. America has produced more than 12 million jobs in the last 4-1/2 years, but more and more of those jobs are being created in the suburbs, not in our cities. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people in our cities are struggling to move from welfare to work. Meanwhile, the migration of middle class families of all races from cities to suburbs continues. And while our national unemployment rate is below 5%, we know this masks continuing inequalities. For example, Nebraska has unemployment of 2.5% -- while many cities still have unemployment of 15%. {CHECK}

So above all, our urban development strategy revolves around attracting businesses and jobs to the cities. We have already created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities -- providing a powerful combination of tax incentives and freedom from government red tape to spark private enterprise in poor neighborhoods. We have created a network of Community Development Financial Institutions that is infusing our cities with the capital. And we recognized that a major barrier to economic growth are sites contaminated by toxic chemicals. We are taking those "Brownfields" that were the shame of our cities and converting them into productive assets.

When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities. But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The third thing we must do to revitalize our cities is create jobs for the one million people we must move from welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources they need to help get and keep good jobs. I also fought for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare recipients.

We are working with Members of Congress of both parties to make sure that funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many welfare recipients live. I ask you to let the Congress know how important this is. I am pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by the rules, and I have made clear that I will not sign any legislation that reneges on any part of this deal.

The fourth thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities. Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase

the bonds that tie people together. So far, our successful economic strategy has helped 2.5 million people across America to become new homeowners. But, not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities. This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step. There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the "Office on Your Block" initiative I mentioned earlier, this represents a \$1 billion downpayment toward our number priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world. That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

There are many things we must do to reform education. We are working to connect every classroom in America to the internet by the Year 2000, so that children in the inner city will have access to the same universe of knowledge as children in the suburbs. We are mobilizing 1 million volunteers in our America Reads initiative, to meet our goal that every 8 year old will be able to read independently. And above all, we have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards -- and city schools are no exception. I have challenged our nation to set high national standards for reading and math. We know that this won't be easy; we will have to demand more from our students, our teachers and our schools. But we know that if we don't do this -- if we accept the false idea that some children just can't learn, and should be moved from grade to grade before they learn the basics -- then we cheat them and our nation.

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens. Let me especially mention the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years. Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. People with HIV and AIDS deserve the best possible care; this guide is an important step in raising the standards for that care.

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's very compelling State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality. We have started to change that -- but we still have far to go.

Six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America.

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. That is why I am pleased by today's Supreme Court decision upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to escape religious persecution and secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation assures that the religious liberties of all Americans will be strongly protected.] or...

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[And] [I]n this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share. It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together. You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Draft 6/22/97 7am

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U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23, 1997**

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This is the [x]th time I have had the pleasure of speaking to the Conference of Mayors. And it is clearer than ever that our cities are at a crossroads -- that, thanks to the visionary, hands on leadership of so many of you, America's cities have turned a corner and are prepared to play the central role in our society in the next century that they have in this century. Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans, and for millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. Our cities have always been symbols of the economic progress and cultural achievement that have made America the envy of the world. That can be more than our history: you are making it our present, and it can be our future as well.

For far too long, many Americans wondered if our cities were in permanent decline, battered by seemingly inexorable economic dislocation, seemingly unstoppable waves of crime, seemingly intractable problems of poverty and inner-city decay. Today, America's cities are back. Today, Secretary Cuomo released a compelling "Report on America's Cities." We are seeing the first economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming. We are taking back our streets from the worst ravages of crime. New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. And dozens of mayors have changed the way city governments serve the people, providing services with less cost, less bureaucracy, fewer rules and regulations.

Now, we have a choice. We as a nation can continue that progress -- or let it slip from our grasp. New times bring new challenges: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence. America has produced more than 12 million jobs in the last 4-1/2 years, but more and more of those jobs are being created in the suburbs, not in our cities. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people in our cities are struggling to move from welfare to work. Meanwhile, the migration of middle class families of all races from cities to suburbs continues. And while our national unemployment rate

perched & deep
unemployment
in hard times
With Inserts

is below 5%, we know this masks continuing inequalities. For example, Nebraska has ~~unemployment of 2.5%~~ while many cities still have unemployment of 15%. {CHECK}

We have made so much progress, but if we do not act now, we could look upon this time not as the beginning of a renaissance for America's cities, but a missed opportunity.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflected a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It was different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending that sought to pave over the problems with billions of dollars and billions of tons of concrete. And it was just as different from the new philosophy that would tell our cities and those who live in them: "You're on your own." Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems. The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

And this must be the approach we take as we press forward with our urban strategy. First, doing more to take back our streets from crime. Second, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America. Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

Let me begin by talking about crime. Everyone here knows that safe streets are a precondition for every other thing we must do. So we must continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to reduce crime and restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets. I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by "empowerment." The "every day" presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for up to 2,000 police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

[IF BRADY BILL RULING: *And we cannot turn back in our campaign to take guns off our streets. The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court ruled part of the Brady Law unconstitutional. I am deeply disappointed by the Court's decision. But let me be clear: Today's ruling should not mean an end to the background checks that are helping keep our streets safe. Twenty-seven states, including California, now conduct background checks as a matter of state law and will continue to do so. Today, I have instructed Attorney General Reno and Treasury Secretary Rubin to make sure police departments across the country know that they can keep conducting Brady background checks on a voluntary basis.*

[Our goal is clear: No background check, no handgun. And I will continue to do everything in my power to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals and to keep our cities safe.]

OR [The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court upheld the Brady Law. This is a victory for all Americans.]

The second thing we must do is to create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there.

Our national economic strategy is this: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade. It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people can benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s. We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than

\$70 billion this year. And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

[Let me say one thing about how we will balance the budget. The Supreme Court's decision today to strike down the line item veto deprives the President of a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It will make the job of balancing the budget more difficult, but it will not deter us from that goal].

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5000

When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities. But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The third thing we must do to revitalize our cities is create jobs for the one million people we must move from welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources they need to help get and keep good jobs. I also fought for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare recipients.

We are working with Members of Congress of both parties to make sure that funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many welfare recipients live. I ask you to let the Congress know how important this is. I am pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by the rules, and I have made clear that I will not sign any legislation that reneges on any part of this deal.

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But it is clear that real, serious challenges remain. Some are the new challenges brought by new times: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence. Some, like the continued flight of middle-class families from central cities to the suburbs, are persistent problems that must be overcome for the long-term health of our cities. As a nation, we face a simple choice. We can face these challenges head-on, and continue the great progress of the last four years -- or we can let this opportunity slip from our grasp, and risk all that we have built, and more.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflects a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It is different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending, that tried to pave over problems with billions of dollars and tons of concrete. And it is just as different from the approach of others who would tell our cities and those who live in them: "You're on your own." Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems. The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

We must continue this approach as we press forward. First, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America. Second, doing more to take back our streets from crime. Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools and investing more in our young people. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

The first and most important thing we must do is press forward to create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there.

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When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities. But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The second thing we must do is to push forward in the fight against crime and violence. Safe streets are a precondition for the success of every other thing we must do. We must

continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets. I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by "empowerment." The "every day" presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

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The fourth thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities. Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. Since I took office, 4.7 million people across America have become new homeowners. But not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities. This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step. There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the "Officer Next Door" initiative I announced earlier, this represents a \$695 million downpayment toward our priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world. That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

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Today, Secretary Cuomo released a compelling report on the "State of the Cities." We are seeing the first economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming. We are taking back our streets from the worst ravages of crime. New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. And dozens of mayors have changed the way city governments serve the people, providing services with less cost, less bureaucracy, fewer rules and regulations.

But it is clear that real, serious challenges remain. Some are the new challenges brought by new times: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence. Some, like the continued flight of middle-class families from central cities to the suburbs, are persistent problems that must be overcome for the long-term health of our cities. As a nation, we face a simple choice. We can face these challenges head-on, and continue the great progress of the last four years -- or we can let this opportunity slip from our grasp, and risk all that we have built, and more.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflects a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It is different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending, that tried to pave over problems with billions of dollars and tons of concrete. And it is just as different from the approach of others who would tell our cities and those who live in them: "You're on your own." Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems. The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

We must continue this approach as we press forward. First, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America. Second, doing more to take back our streets from crime. Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools and investing more in our young people. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

The first and most important thing we must do is press forward to create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there.

Our national economic strategy is this: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade. It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people can benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s. We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than \$70 billion this year. And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

[Let me say one thing about how we will balance the budget. The Supreme Court's decision today to strike down the line item veto deprives the President of a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It will make the job of balancing the budget more difficult, but it will not deter us from that goal].

OR [The Supreme Court's decision today to uphold the line item veto gives the President a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It is a victory for all Americans.]

The centerpiece of our urban development strategy is an aggressive plan to attract businesses and jobs to the cities. We have already created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities -- providing a powerful combination of tax incentives and freedom from government red tape to spark private enterprise in poor neighborhoods. We have created a network of Community Development Financial Institutions that is infusing our cities with capital. We reformed the Community Reinvestment Act so that it works better to steer private capital from mainstream commercial banks into poor inner city and rural communities. This amounts to a multi billion dollar investment in our cities -- bringing private sector jobs and hope to our hardest pressed citizens. And we recognized that a major barrier to economic growth are sites contaminated by toxic chemicals. We are taking those "Brownfields" that were the shame of our cities and converting them into productive assets.

When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities. But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The second thing we must do is to push forward in the fight against crime and violence. Safe streets are a precondition for the success of every other thing we must do. We must

continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets. I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by "empowerment." The "every day" presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

POSSIBLE INSERT IF BRADY BILL UPHELD

[The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court upheld the Brady Law. This is a victory for all Americans.]

The third thing we must do to revitalize our cities is create jobs for the one million people we must move from welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources they need to help get and keep good jobs. I also fought for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare recipients.

We are working with Members of Congress of both parties to make sure that a significant portion of the funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many welfare recipients live. I ask you to let the Congress know how important this is. I am pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by

the rules, and I have made clear that I will not sign any legislation that reneges on this vital part of the budget deal.

The fourth thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities. Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. Since I took office, 4.7 million people across America have become new homeowners. But not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities. This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step. There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the "Officer Next Door " initiative I announced earlier, this represents a \$695 million downpayment toward our priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world. That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

There are many things we must do to reform education. We are working to connect every classroom in America to the Internet by the Year 2000, and ensure that all our children have the skills to master it, so that children in the inner city will have access to the same universe of knowledge as children in the suburbs. We are mobilizing 1 million tutors in our America Reads initiative, to meet our goal that every 8 year old will be able to read independently. And above all, we have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards, beginning with reading and math -- and city schools must be no exception. We know that this won't be easy; we will have to demand more from our students, our teachers and our schools. But we know that if we don't do this -- if we accept the false idea that some children just can't learn, and should be moved from grade to grade before they learn the basics -- then we cheat them and our nation.

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens. Let me especially mention the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years. Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. These guidelines and our vaccine initiative bring us closer to our ultimate goals: to find a cure for those with HIV and to bring a permanent end to this epidemic.

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality.

We have started to change that, and six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America. This initiative will combine forthright dialogue, serious study, and real action. And nowhere is the challenge to build One America more pronounced than in our cities -- the gateways to our nation. So we are counting on every one of you to join us, to step forward and share with us what you know, show us what works, and help ensure that we meet this great national challenge.

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. That is why I am pleased by today's Supreme Court decision upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to escape religious persecution and secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation assures that the religious liberties of all Americans will be strongly protected.] or...

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. Today the United States Supreme Court held part of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act unconstitutional. We will study that opinion closely. Religious freedom is central to the American system of liberty. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation reaffirmed that right. Although we are disappointed by the Supreme Court's ruling, we will continue to work to protect religious liberty to the fullest extent the Constitution allows.]

[And] [I]n this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share. It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together. You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.



Sandy Thurman

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With Inserts

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

JUNE 23, 1997

Acknowledgments: Sec. Cuomo; Sec. Herman; Sec. Slater; Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Zoe Lofgren; Mayor Daley; Mayor Willie Brown; Mayor Helmke; Tom Cochran. *[Announce intention to nominate Sol Ramierez, mayor of Laredo Texas; to succeed Secretary Cuomo as Assistant Secretary of HUD for Community Planning and Development.]*

This is the [x]th time I have had the pleasure of speaking to the Conference of Mayors.

And it is clearer than ever that our cities are at a crossroads -- that, thanks to the visionary, hands on leadership of so many of you, America's cities have turned a corner and are prepared to play the central role in our society in the next century that they have in this century. Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans, and for millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. Our cities have always been symbols of the economic progress and cultural achievement that have made America the envy of the world. That can be more than our history: you are making it our present, and it can be our future as well.

For far too long, many Americans wondered if our cities were in permanent decline, battered by seemingly inexorable economic dislocation, seemingly unstoppable waves of crime, seemingly intractable problems of poverty and inner-city decay. Today, America's cities are back. Today, Secretary Cuomo released a compelling "Report on America's Cities." We are seeing the first economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming.

We are taking back our streets from the worst ravages of crime. New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. And dozens of mayors have changed the way city governments serve the people, providing services with less cost, less bureaucracy, fewer rules and regulations.

Now, we have a choice. We as a nation can continue that progress -- or let it slip from our grasp.

New times bring new challenges: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence.

America has produced more than 12 million jobs in the last 4-1/2 years, but more and more of those jobs are being created in the suburbs, not in our cities. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people in our cities are struggling to move from welfare to work. Meanwhile, the migration of middle class families of all races from cities to suburbs continues. And while our national unemployment rate is below 5%, we know this masks continuing inequalities.

For example, Nebraska has unemployment of 2.5% -- while many cities still have unemployment of 15%.

{CHECK}

We have made so much progress, but if we do not act now, we could look upon this time not as the beginning of a renaissance for America's cities, but a missed opportunity.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflected a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It was different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending that sought to pave over the problems with billions of dollars and billions of tons of concrete. And it was just as different from the new philosophy that would tell our cities and those who live in them: “You’re on your own.” Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems.

The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

And this must be the approach we take as we press forward with our urban strategy. First, doing more to take back our streets from crime. Second, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America.

Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

Let me begin by talking about crime. Everyone here knows that safe streets are a precondition for every other thing we must do. So we must continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to reduce crime and restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets.

I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by “empowerment.” The “every day” presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities.

We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve. Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for up to 2,000 police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes.

[IF BRADY BILL RULING: *And we cannot turn back in our campaign to take guns off our streets. The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons, fugitives and stalkers from purchasing handguns. You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court ruled part of the Brady Law unconstitutional. I am deeply disappointed by the Court's decision. But let me be clear: Today's ruling should not mean an end to the background checks that are helping keep our streets safe. Twenty-seven states, including California, now conduct background checks as a matter of state law and will continue to do so.*

Today, I have instructed Attorney General Reno and Treasury Secretary Rubin to make sure police departments across the country know that they can keep conducting Brady background checks on a voluntary basis.

[Our goal is clear: No background check, no handgun. And I will continue to do everything in my power to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals and to keep our cities safe.]

OR [The Brady Bill has kept 250,000 felons and fugitives from purchasing handguns.

You stood with us to pass this important legislation, and it has been critical to our success. This morning, the Supreme Court upheld the Brady Law. This is a victory for all Americans.]

The second thing we must do is to create the economic conditions that will bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and keep them there.

Our national economic strategy is this: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade.

It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people can benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s. We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than \$70 billion this year.

And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

[Let me say one thing about how we will balance the budget. The Supreme Court's decision today to strike down the line item veto deprives the President of a valuable tool to help keep the budget in balance and to ensure that we put our public funds to the best possible uses. It will make the job of balancing the budget more difficult, but it will not deter us from that goal].

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The centerpiece of our urban development strategy is an aggressive plan to attract businesses and jobs to the cities. We have already created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities -- providing a powerful combination of tax incentives and freedom from government red tape to spark private enterprise in poor neighborhoods.

We have created a network of Community Development Financial Institutions that is infusing our cities with the capital. And we recognized that a major barrier to economic growth are sites contaminated by toxic chemicals. We are taking those “Brownfields” that were the shame of our cities and converting them into productive assets.

When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities.

But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The third thing we must do to revitalize our cities is create jobs for the one million people we must move from welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources they need to help get and keep good jobs.

I also fought for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare recipients.

We are working with Members of Congress of both parties to make sure that funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many welfare recipients live. I ask you to let the Congress know how important this is. I am pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by the rules, and I have made clear that I will not sign any legislation that reneges on any part of this deal.

The fourth thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities.

Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. So far, our successful economic strategy has helped 2.5 million people across America to become new homeowners. But, not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200.

Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities. This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step.

There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the “Office on Your Block” initiative I mentioned earlier, this represents a \$1 billion downpayment toward our number priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world.

That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

There are many things we must do to reform education. We are working to connect every classroom in America to the Internet by the Year 2000, so that children in the inner city will have access to the same universe of knowledge as children in the suburbs.

We are mobilizing 1 million volunteers in our America Reads initiative, to meet our goal that every 8 year old will be able to read independently. And above all, we have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards -- and city schools are no exception. I have challenged our nation to set high national standards for reading and math. We know that this won't be easy; we will have to demand more from our students, our teachers and our schools. But we know that if we don't do this -- if we accept the false idea that some children just can't learn, and should be moved from grade to grade before they learn the basics -- then we cheat them and our nation.

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens.

Let me especially mention the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years.

Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. People with HIV and AIDS deserve the best possible care; this guide is an important step in raising the standards for that care.

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action.

More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's very compelling State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality. We have started to change that -- but we still have far to go.

Six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment.

I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past.

This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America.

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. That is why I am pleased by today's Supreme Court decision upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.]

Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to escape religious persecution and secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation assures that the religious liberties of all Americans will be strongly protected.] or...

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[*And*] [I]n this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share.

It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together. You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

JUNE 23, 1997

① URBAN BUDGET

↳

BROWNFIELDS

EXPLICITLY MORE \$

WEINSTEIN FOR

AND

CDFI

TOXIC WASTE SITES

INFRASTRUCTURE →

↳ NEXTREA
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CYNTHIA
UNTIL AUGUST
800,000

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1/93-3/97

ANTI-DISCRIM

2.2m ← 2.9m
PEPS ADT 1m ADOUT
100-150K + MONTH
SINCE AUG.

→ SAN FRANCISCO

↳ CHRONICLE

SINGLE MOTHERS

GOING TO WORK

BIGGEST DROP IN
BEFORE BILL

Acknowledgments: Sec. Cuomo; Sec. Herman; Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Zoe Lofgren; Mayor Daley; Mayor Willie Brown; Mayor Helmke; Tom Cochran; the new Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House, Mickey Ibarra. *I also want to take this opportunity to welcome one of your own to my Administration. I am pleased to announce my intention to nominate Saul Ramirez, mayor of Laredo, Texas, to fill Secretary Cuomo's former job as Assistant Secretary of HUD for Community Planning and Development.*

I always look forward to the opportunity to speak to the Conference of Mayors.

Today, it is clear, that because of the visionary, hands on leadership of so many of you, America's cities have turned a corner and are prepared to play the central role in our society in the next century that they have in this century. Throughout our history, cities have been the gateway to hope and opportunity for millions of Americans, and for millions of immigrants who came to our shores in search of a better life. Our cities have always been symbols of the economic progress and cultural achievement that have made America the envy of the world. That can be more than our history: you are making it our present, and it can be our future as well.

For far too long, many Americans wondered if our cities were in permanent decline, battered by seemingly inexorable economic dislocation, seemingly unstoppable waves of crime, seemingly intractable problems of poverty and inner-city decay. Today, America's cities are back. Today, Secretary Cuomo released a compelling report on the "State of the Cities." We are seeing the first economic resurgence in our cities since World War II. In America's 50 largest cities, the unemployment rate has been cut by nearly a third. More downtowns are coming back to life, with sports and tourism and local business all booming. We are taking back our streets from the worst ravages of crime.

New waves of immigrants are starting new businesses and bringing new energy. Because of the disciplined leadership of so many people in this room, the fiscal health of our cities is stronger than it has been in decades. And dozens of mayors have changed the way city governments serve the people, providing services with less cost, less bureaucracy, fewer rules and regulations.

But it is clear that real, serious challenges remain. Some are the new challenges brought by new times: the need to create more jobs for those on welfare; the challenge of absorbing new immigrants; the rising tide of juvenile violence.

Some, like the continued flight of middle-class families from central cities to the suburbs, are persistent problems that must be overcome for the long-term health of our cities. As a nation, we face a simple choice. We can face these challenges head-on, and continue the great progress of the last four years -- or we can let this opportunity slip from our grasp, and risk all that we have built, and more.

During my time as President, we have worked with you, helping you help your cities and putting some of the best local ideas to work nationwide.

Our urban strategy reflects a revolutionary new philosophy of bottom-up empowerment. It is different from the old big government approach that sought to solve the problems of our cities with massive spending, that tried to pave over problems with billions of dollars and tons of concrete. And it is just as different from the approach of others who would tell our cities and those who live in them: “You’re on your own.” Instead of imposing solutions from Washington, we are giving communities the support and the tools they need to solve their own problems.

The key is empowerment. Recognizing that the people on the front lines -- in city halls, in police precinct houses, and on city streets -- know best what the challenges are and how best to meet them. And recognizing that our oldest values of work and neighborhood, faith and family, safe streets and good schools, hold the answers to the newest problems we face.

We must continue this approach as we press forward. First, extending private sector prosperity so it touches every neighborhood in America. Second, doing more to take back our streets from crime.

Third, finishing the job of welfare reform by creating more jobs for all who can work. Fourth, extending the benefits of homeownership even more widely. Fifth, raising standards in our schools and investing more in our young people. And sixth, meeting public health challenges like AIDS.

The first and most important thing we must do is
press forward to create the economic conditions that will
bring business, jobs and people back to our cities . . . and
keep them there.

Our national economic strategy is this: reduce the deficit, invest in our people, and open the world to trade. It is designed to stimulate private sector growth, to help America move from the industrial age to the information age, and to make sure all of our people can benefit from the new opportunities of the new economy.

Today, our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation -- and for the first time, the effects of this economic revival are being felt all around the country. Unemployment has dropped below 5% for the first time in 24 years, with the largest decline in income inequality since the 1960s.

We have cut the deficit by 77% -- from \$290 billion the day I took office to less than \$70 billion this year. And now, with the balanced budget agreement I have reached with the leaders of Congress, the deficit is heading to zero.

The centerpiece of our urban development strategy is an aggressive plan to attract businesses and jobs to the cities. We have already created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities -- providing a powerful combination of tax incentives and freedom from government red tape to spark private enterprise in poor neighborhoods. We have created a network of Community Development Financial Institutions that is infusing our cities with capital. We reformed the Community Reinvestment Act so that it works better to steer private capital from mainstream commercial banks into poor inner city and rural communities.

This amounts to a multi billion dollar investment in our cities -- bringing private sector jobs and hope to our hardest pressed citizens. And we recognized that a major barrier to economic growth are sites contaminated by toxic chemicals. We are taking those “Brownfields” that were the shame of our cities and converting them into productive assets.

When I reached our historic bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress, they pledged to work with us to expand Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Brownfields tax incentives. These initiatives are essential to the health of our cities.

But the tax plans put together by the House and Senate fail to live up to this commitment. That is wrong. I want every one of you to make it clear to the people who represent you in Congress that you expect them to honor this agreement and their commitment to our nation's cities.

The second thing we must do is to push forward in the fight against crime and violence. Safe streets are a precondition for the success of every other thing we must do. We must continue the remarkable progress we have made in the last four and a half years to restore peace and security to our cities.

As you all know so well, the strategy pioneered in our cities of more community police, tougher punishment and fewer guns in the hands of criminals is making a difference. Last year we saw the largest drop in violent crime in more than three-and-a-half decades. Murders dropped a stunning 11% in 1996. Cities all around the country, including San Francisco, are experiencing dramatic declines in their violent crime rates.

Now we must continue with this tough-and-smart approach. We are well on the way toward meeting our goal of 100,000 new community police on our streets.

I will fight to make sure that the national government meets this commitment. And I will continue to push for real juvenile crime legislation that guarantees more prosecutors, probation officers, and afterschool programs for at-risk young people.

And we must continue to forge the partnership between police and citizens that we see in the success of the block-patrols and neighborhood watch groups that are the essence of what I mean by “empowerment.” The “every day” presence of police on our streets has made a huge difference to the safety of our communities. We can increase that presence even more by encouraging police to live in the communities they serve.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we are taking steps to do just that. In the coming year, The Officer Next Door program will make it possible for police officers and their families to buy HUD-owned single family homes in our central cities at a 50% discount. More police on the beat have made our neighborhoods feel like home again -- just think what it will be like when more of our police make our neighborhoods their homes

The third thing we must do to revitalize our cities is
create jobs for the one million people we must move from
welfare to work by the year 2000. That is why I fought
for a \$3 billion welfare-to-work job challenge fund in our
balanced budget that specifically gives cities the resources
they need to help get and keep good jobs. I also fought
for a new welfare-to-work tax credit that will give private
employers extra incentive to hire long-term welfare
recipients.

We are working with Members of Congress of both parties to make sure that a significant portion of the funds will go directly to cities and other communities where so many welfare recipients live. I ask you to let the Congress know how important this is. I am pleased that we reached bipartisan agreement to restore benefits to legal immigrants who work hard and play by the rules, and I have made clear that I will not sign any legislation that reneges on this vital part of the budget deal.

The fourth thing we must do is to make our cities places that anyone would be proud to call home . . . and make it easier for people to buy homes in our cities.

Homeownership is one of the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. Since I took office, 4.7 million people across America have become new homeowners. But not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities.

This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step. There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home.

And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the “Officer Next Door ” initiative I announced earlier, this represents a \$695 million downpayment toward our priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world.

That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

There are many things we must do to reform education.

We are working to connect every classroom in America to the Internet by the Year 2000, and ensure that all our children have the skills to master it, so that children in the inner city will have access to the same universe of knowledge as children in the suburbs. We are mobilizing 1 million tutors in our America Reads initiative, to meet our goal that every 8 year old will be able to read independently. And above all, we have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards, beginning with reading and math -- and city schools must be no exception. We know that this won't be easy; we will have to demand more from our students, our teachers and our schools.

But we know that if we don't do this -- if we accept the false idea that some children just can't learn, and should be moved from grade to grade before they learn the basics -- then we cheat them and our nation.

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens -- especially the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years. Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. But, until there is a vaccine, prevention is our strongest weapon against AIDS. That is why we must continue to identify sound public health strategies that enable local communities to address the twin epidemics of HIV and substance abuse. We will also continue to work to provide the best treatment and services to those who are already infected.

These actions and our vaccine initiative bring us closer to our ultimate goals: to find a cure for those with HIV and to bring a permanent end to this epidemic.

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments.

Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality.

We have started to change that, and six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America. This initiative will combine forthright dialogue, serious study, and real action.

And nowhere is the challenge to build One America more pronounced than in our cities -- the gateways to our nation. So we are counting on every one of you to join us, to step forward and share with us what you know, show us what works, and help ensure that we meet this great national challenge.

In this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share. It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together.

You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.