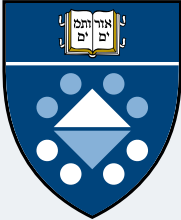


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

CEO SUMMIT

Yale Mayors College

Washington, DC | March 14, 2023



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive Leadership Institute

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John Cooper, Nashville TN
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Elizabeth B. Kautz, Burnsville MN
Jon Mitchell, New Bedford MA
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Brandon M. Scott, Baltimore MD
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RESPONDENT

Christopher Shays, US Congressman (1987-2009), State of Connecticut

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MAYORS

Byron W. Brown, Buffalo, NY
Kimbley Craig, Salinas CA
Cassie Franklin, Everett WA
Joseph P. Ganim, Bridgeport CT
Trey Mendez, Brownsville TX
Sheldon A. Neeley, Flint MI
Jim Strickland, Memphis TN
Randall L. Woodfin, Birmingham AL
Nadine Woodward, Spokane WA

RESPONDENT

Arvind Bhambri, Professor, Marshall School, Univ. of Southern California



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OPENING COMMENTS

Farooq Kathwari, Chairman, President & CEO, Ethan Allen Global

Jim McCann, Founder & Chairman, 1-800-Flowers.com

MAYORS

Kent Guinn, Ocala FL

John Hamilton, Bloomington IN

Kevin Hartke, Chandler AZ

William H. Joyce, Stillwater OK

Vi Lyles, Charlotte NC

Tim Mahoney, Fargo ND

Christina Muryn, Findlay OH

Caroline Simmons, Stamford CT

Konstantin Usov, Deputy Mayor, Kyiv, Ukraine

Steve Williams, Huntington WV

RESPONDENT

Michael Kiely, President, Global Government Affairs, UPS

Reflections on Transitions – Mayors in the Afterlife

Richard J. Berry, Albuquerque NM (2009-2017)

Mick Cornett, Oklahoma City OK (2004-2018)

Bill Peduto, Pittsburgh PA (2014-2022)

Adrian Perkins, Shreveport LA (2018-2022)

Libby Schaaf, Oakland CA (2015-2023)

Tom Tait, Anaheim CA (2010-2018)



Key Themes from 2023 Yale Mayors College

Overview

The 10th Yale Mayors College, held in Washington DC on March 14, 2023, led by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld from the Yale School of Management, brought together about 40 mayors from across the United States – along with the Deputy Mayor of Kyiv.



Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, Senior Associate Dean,
Yale School of Management

Mayors heard from a representative from the White House focused on domestic issues and discussed the most significant challenges they are facing including dealing with national policies and municipal agendas, improving the infrastructure in their community, and ensuring public

safety in an increasingly violent culture. Several former mayors shared how they have made the difficult personal transition from City Hall back to private life.

Key Themes

Mayors are apolitical problem solvers.

Mayors are the backbone of the country and as a former member of Congress said, “America’s last hope.” Regardless of a mayor’s political party, once in City Hall, mayors tend to move to the political center. Mayors articulate a long-term vision for their city but tend to be consumed in solving day-to-day problems to make life better for constituents. An attendee from the White House conveyed President Biden’s sentiments as, “Mayors get stuff done.”

Despite the centrist mindsets of many mayors, several mayors expressed concerns that the national political divisions and culture wars that plague politics at the national level are coming to cities. Mayors described hearing critics from the right who described centrist mayors as woke or soft on crime, while critics on the left remain focused on defunding the police and are opposed to tougher penalties for criminals. Increasingly, mayors – especially several mayors who lead blue cities in red states – find themselves in difficult situations.

Mayors are appreciative of recent federal legislation but want more time to spend money that has been allocated and want more access to infrastructure funds.

Astoundingly, 100% of mayors in attendance said that President Biden’s legislative measures – including the American Rescue Plan, the Infrastructure Bill, and the Inflation Reduction Act – have directly helped their city or community. And 69% of mayors say their municipality is in a healthier position than five years ago. In many instances the funds that have been provided have been used for social services, for increased police, and for infrastructure, such as transportation.

However, mayors want more time to spend the ARP funds that have been provided and mayors want cities to have access to infrastructure funds, which have been provided to the states. When provided to the states, governors and state legislatures may play political games with these funds and may force cities in a state to compete with each other for these funds. Mayors want infrastructure funds to be provided to cities.

Mayors are focused on building public trust and leading during crises.

The US population is increasingly distrustful of government and elected officials. The public sees episodes of violence or issues of unsafe drinking water and lacks trust in government. It is in this environment that mayors are working hard to build and sustain public trust. This comes from listening, empathizing, being accessible and accountable, delivering measurable results, and constantly communicating.

Public safety is perhaps the most concerning and most difficult issue facing mayors.

Among attendees at this Mayors College, 12 mayors have had to lead through some form of a disaster, often a mass shooting that devastated a community. In addition to these horrific events, mayors see violence and murders on a daily basis, due to an increasingly violent culture, widespread access to guns, a culture that glorifies guns, and systemic failures of the criminal justice system along with lack of mental health resources.

With that as the backdrop, mayors are working hard to strengthen their police forces and increase penalties for violent criminals. Mayors are working to get guns off the streets, hold gun makers and gun sellers more responsible, and are trying to break the cycle of retaliation and help citizens – especially young men – develop better ways to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.

These challenges are compounded by the continuing opioid and fentanyl epidemic.

Mayors love their jobs and feel some anxiety about life after having served as mayor.

Despite the immense challenges of being a mayor today, most of the mayors at the Yale Mayors College love their job and find immense purpose, meaning, and fulfillment in this role. While many days are difficult, mayors feel satisfaction in helping their communities and constituents.

This sense of fulfillment in serving as mayor can make it difficult to leave this role and to transition to whatever is next. But several mayors who have successfully made this transition – at times after a period of some difficulty and soul searching – assured current mayors that there are many other ways to find a sense of purpose and satisfaction after leaving office. Many mayors have written books, are speaking, and are engaged in business, philanthropic, and civic activities locally, nationally, and internationally. While serving as mayor is generally viewed as an amazing but pressure-packaged experience, there are also fulfilling post-mayoral experiences.





Welcome/Introductions

Overview

The mayors at the Yale Mayors College come from very different communities, but share similar challenges and mindsets. These mayors are humble, apolitical public servants who are motivated to serve their constituents, solve problems, and make daily life better while also articulating long-term visions and leading major transformational changes. Serving as a mayor is both an amazing, fulfilling job and an extremely difficult job that requires navigating constant crises.

Context

The roughly 40 mayors at the Yale Mayors College introduced themselves, said where they were from and how long they have been in office, and briefly shared their perspectives on serving as a mayor and the most significant challenges they are facing.

Key Takeaways

The Yale Mayors College brings together a tremendous diversity of mayors from very different communities.

The mayors represent tremendous diversity in terms of geography, age, race, religion, political affiliation, size of city, length of service, and more. There were newly minted mayors along with mayors who have served for more than 20 years. Some mayors are seeking reelection, others will be stepping down within the next year, and some esteemed former mayors now have emeritus status.

Mayors at the Yale Mayors College represent large diverse cities with large numbers of immigrants, and smaller, more homogenous, more conservative cities. There were mayors from America's heartland, from border cities, and from both coasts. Some mayors represent cities where the economy is based on agriculture, while others are from cities with a large manufacturing base.

There was agreement on the value of convening with other mayors to share challenges and successes, gain insights, and grow. There was a strong sense of comradery and several mayors remarked that being able to speak openly with other mayors serves as therapy.



Lily Mei, Mayor, Fremont, CA

Being a mayor is both the best public service job in America and the hardest job imaginable—often within the same day.

Several mayors described how much they enjoy serving as mayor, because they can have a positive impact on people's lives and on their communities. It can be a rewarding, fulfilling role. One mayor, who only has one more year to serve due to term limits – and whose city has experienced multiple crises – still said, “I would do a third term in a heartbeat because it's the greatest job I think I'll ever have.”

“I think we'd all agree that there's really no more interesting public service job in America than being a mayor of a city. It really is a blessing.”

However, mayors were candid in sharing that while it can be a great job, with many positive days, positive moments, and a sense of fulfillment, there are also many difficult days.



Elizabeth B. Kautz, Mayor, Burnsville, MN



Richard J. Berry, Mayor, Albuquerque, NM (2009-2017); Fellow, Yale CELI

“There are days when it’s the greatest job and days when it’s the worst. And no one else knows that, except for other mayors.”



Christina Muryn, Mayor, Findlay, OH

Another mayor went even further, saying it is not that one day is great and the next day is bad; it is that one second may be great and the next second is bad. This volatility is because, as several mayors pointed out, “Mayors are dealing with crisis management every single day.”

“I’ve been asked by people what it’s like to be mayor. I tell them, ‘Every day is a s&%* sandwich. Sometimes it’s a double or a triple.’”

Mayors must be both long-term visionaries and practical, short-term problem solvers.

An academic who is studying mayors observed that mayors have to deal with the challenges of multiple constituencies and stakeholders while under constant public scrutiny and pressure. Mayors have to deal with multiple departments of city government in producing short-term goals while also building the city for the long term.

“We are each CEOs of the city that we run.”

Mayors discussed the everyday problems they are charged with solving to serve people and bring their cities together, as well as bigger-picture, longer-term challenges. Among the challenges mentioned – and discussed in more depth in later sessions – were population growth, economic development, affordable housing shortages, guns and crime, opioids, water, and recruiting and retaining employees in city government.

One mayor remarked that in addition to dealing with day-to-day problems, the mayor must set the vision. Another mayor said it is the job of the mayor to drive innovation, which requires fresh ideas. In fact, part of his reason for attending the Yale Mayors College was to “increase his idea inventory.”

“The thing I didn’t realize on becoming mayor a few years ago was the degree that mayors have to drive innovation . . . and the need for ideas.”

Other mayors described rebuilding or revitalizing their cities, making decisions about where to prioritize current and future investments, and the need for personal and communal resilience.



National Policies & Municipal Agendas

Overview

Most mayors have positive attitudes toward federal legislation that has provided municipalities with additional funding being used for social services—like rental assistance, food assistance, mental health resources, and more. However, there is some frustration that cities may not be able to access funds from the Infrastructure Act, as these funds are going to states, not cities. There was also a growing sense that the culture wars playing out on the national level are finding their way to cities, to the consternation of mayors, who have tended to be more apolitical, pragmatic problem solvers.

Context

After hearing from a member of the Biden administration who discussed legislative priorities and challenges relevant to cities, mayors discussed the intersection of national policies and their own local municipal agendas.

Key Takeaways

The Biden administration saluted mayors for getting things done; mayors asked for more flexibility in spending federal money and access to infrastructure funds.

The accomplishments under the Biden administration are many and are often under-recognized. These include creating more than 12 million jobs, including many manufacturing jobs, having employment at 3.6%—a 54-year low, cutting the budget deficit, lowering the costs of insulin, increasing the number of people vaccinated for Covid, and immediately stabilizing the financial system in the aftermath of the Silicon Valley Bank failure.

While these have been among the Biden administration’s accomplishments at the federal level, a senior representative from the White House called attention to mayors and commended mayors for “getting things done” and for being “accountable for results.”



Anita Dunn, Senior Advisor, The White House

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) contained a great deal of money for state and local governments, and mayors have been great partners of the federal government in helping the country recover from the pandemic.

Looking forward, the Biden administration is most concerned about the crisis that would ensue if Congress does not increase the debt ceiling and the US defaults on its debt.

“We need Congress to pass legislation that will raise the debt ceiling for this country so it can keep functioning . . . at some point in the spring or early summer elected officials from across the country and businesses and the civic community need to help to keep this nation from going into default for the first time.”

In responding to real-time polling questions, most mayors believe that President Biden’s legislative measures have helped their community, believe the White House is attuned to mayors’ concerns, and see their municipality as financially healthier than five years ago.

Real-time polling question	Agree	Disagree
President Biden’s legislative measures—including the ARP, Infrastructure Bill, and Inflation Reduction Act—have helped my city/community directly.	100%	0%
I feel the White House is attuned to the concerns of my town and my community in implementing their major legislative accomplishments.	77%	23%
The Biden administration is not vocal enough in claiming credit for its accomplishments.	54%	46%
My municipality is now in a healthier financial position than 5 years ago.	69%	31%
My community has benefitted from an influx of funding from recent federal legislative bills.	93%	7%

Mayors conveyed that federal funding has allowed their cities to focus on a variety of key priorities, which include funding:

- Transportation initiatives
- Rental assistance and food security assistance
- A social worker to assist police officers
- Mental health services in schools
- Community violence intervention
- Greater access to broadband internet
- Strengthening the electrical grid and reducing greenhouse gas emissions



James B. Hovland, Mayor, Edina, MN

Comments from mayors to the Biden administration included:

- **Communicate better.** Mayors believe that the legislation that has been enacted and the President's policies are popular with families. But some mayors believe the Biden administration needs to do a better job of communicating accomplishments and making them tangible to people. A response was that it takes time for funding and initiatives to play out and for people to experience the effectiveness of federal programs. Also, the \$1.1 trillion in infrastructure investments are just starting to go out and the Administration is now concentrating on the "implementation agenda."

"You're just starting to see and hopefully many of you are going to see signs in your communities."

- **Give cities more time to spend ARP funds.** Mayors want the Administration to show flexibility in extending the deadline for when ARP funds need to be spent by.

"We may need additional time to spend those dollars."

- **Focus on crime.** One mayor expressed frustration that too many criminals are running free because there aren't enough jails and laws aren't strong enough. The Administration's response was that federal laws are tough for violent crimes and these issues were often due to state laws. While it is important to lock up violent criminals, it does not make sense to fill federal jails with non-violent offenders.



Levar M. Stoney, Mayor, Richmond, VA

Other mayors are concerned that President Biden and other Democrats will be portrayed as weak on crime and that the President needs to speak up on guns and violence. The response was that the President is speaking up on crime, is in favor of community policing, and has proposed funding to recruit and train more police officers along with investing more in social workers, mental health resources, and other resources to improve public safety.

- **Enable cities access to infrastructure funding.** Mayors expressed frustration that infrastructure money is being distributed to the states. Then within the states, allocation of funding is often highly politicized and cities have to compete with each other for access to infrastructure funding. Mayors want the federal government to allow cities to apply for funds directly, instead of having to go through the states.

"I think the Administration ought to allow [my city] to apply for money in the Infrastructure Act."

- Several mayors from liberal cities in more conservative states described how state legislators are allocating minimal funds to their city based on state-level politics. One mayor described how his state received \$400 million for water and sewer systems. Despite being the third largest city in the state and having the second worst water system, his city only received \$5 million.



Vi Lyles, Mayor, Charlotte, NC

"State legislators are going to very deliberately hold up those funds from getting to your community."

Mayors expressed concern that the culture wars are coming to City Hall.

Mayors view themselves as practical, non-political problem solvers. One mayor said, "No matter where you enter on the political spectrum, City Hall pulls you to the middle." But mayors perceive that the political parties have now both gone to the extremes and the culture wars are increasingly being fought at local levels, which is disappointing and distasteful to many mayors.

A participant commented that once upon a time, mayors felt comfortable if they delivered economically for their community. But increasingly, economic achievements are being overshadowed by culture wars.



John Cooper, Mayor, Nashville, TN



Sheldon A. Neeley, Mayor, Flint, MI

Mayors understand the importance of building and sustaining public trust.

The water crisis in Flint, Michigan is an example where the public lost trust in government, as the city experienced a crisis in confidence. Flint's mayor and other mayors shared ways that they are constantly working to build and sustain public trust.

- Be transparent and accountable. Provide data showing results and communicate frequently.
- Invite public comments and engagement. When community development initiatives are undertaken, bring the community into the planning process.
- Be accessible. One mayor described talking with constituents in the grocery store, going to local school events, and managing how own social media, all to be accessible.

“How do we restore trust? How do we rebuild it? Just show up, just keep working, that’s the only thing we can do.”

Several mayors opposed term limits, to provide adequate time to see initiatives to completion.

Some municipalities have term limits for mayors, while others allow a mayor to remain in office as long as they get reelected. Mayors conveyed that continuity helps provide stability in a community and serving for a long period of time allows taking a long-term perspective and gives time to bring major initiatives to life. In contrast, a person who serves for a short period of time may have ideas and dreams but may not have adequate time to bring them to fruition.



Public Tensions Over Public Safety

Overview

Public safety is the number one priority of most mayors, and is in a state of crisis. There are mass shootings and daily acts of violence, and opioids – especially fentanyl – remain a crisis. Mayors are often blamed for the violence in their cities, yet multiple systemic factors come into play including access to guns, the criminal justice system, and the country’s culture of violence.

Despite these enormous challenges, mayors are leading in trying to address violence through a host of strategies including removing guns from the streets, increasing and changing policing, and changing the culture to improve conflict resolution and decrease retaliation. Then, when all else fails and a city experiences a horrific act of violence, it is the mayor’s role to lead, comfort, empathize, and communicate.

Context

Mayors discussed the enormous public safety challenges that exist in their cities and described actions they are taking to try to address these challenges.

Key Takeaways

In a crisis, mayors must lead, demonstrate empathy, and constantly communicate.

The vast majority of a mayor’s time is spent on substantive duties, policies, and problem solving. But part of a mayor’s responsibility is being a cultural symbol, a leader, and a spokesperson. This is never more true than when a community experiences a crisis. In a crisis, it is the mayor’s role to maintain public trust, present stability, and lead the community through the crisis.

Among attendees at this Mayors College, 12 mayors have been forced to lead their communities through a terrible crisis that involved significant loss of life, such as a mass shooting. This includes a shooter in a supermarket in Buffalo, the country’s worst act of antisemitism in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, and numerous other horrific acts.

When asked how they led during such difficult moments, mayors shared the following:

- **By showing up, being present, listening to victims and families, and empathizing.** Mayors are unable to bring back a slain family member. But they can sit with a mother, listen to them, feel their pain, make sure they are not alone, and comfort them.

“I think the bottom line is in empathizing, being there, listening, showing that you’re feeling pain that members of your community are feeling.”

- **By having a North Star.** This means identifying the most important value upon which all decisions will be based. One mayor who had led through a terrible tragedy identified his North Star as serving the families of victims. Whenever a difficult decision had to be made, it was always based on what the families wanted.



Byron W. Brown, Mayor, Buffalo, NY

- **By communicating with the public.** In a crisis, a mayor is a trusted spokesperson, responsible for keeping up a constant line of communication with the public about what is known and what actions are being taken.

A member of the clergy from Chicago who has personally been involved in the burials of 124 young people under the age of 25 reminded mayors that in this difficult time, “as a public servant, you can be a light.” If society looks at a person as a criminal, that person will believe they are a criminal; but if society has hope in a person, that person can have hope for themselves. It is part of a mayor’s job to have hope. Even in very difficult times it is important for mayors to remember that they were elected because people believe in them to make the right decisions.



Manuel Dorantes, Strategic Advisor, Vatican’s Dicastery for Communications

“You are the hope-giver in chief for your cities. The people of your towns believe in you to be the beacon of hope for their city.”

Mayors are frustrated and angry about the rampant violence in their cities and are doing everything possible to ensure public safety.

Mayors are frustrated and upset by the pervasive violence in their communities. Several mayors expressed outrage at the gun laws in the US and in their states, with many states actually making it even easier for people to get guns.

“The gun laws in our state and our country are insane.”

They also expressed outrage at the country’s culture of violence, at moral depravity, and at the notion of “defunding the police,” which no mayor in attendance was in favor of. Most mayors want to add more police officers and increase police budgets, not defund the police.

In light of the violence in cities, mayors feel that fingers are constantly pointed at them, with the question, “What you doing about this?” But as one mayor said, “I don’t control the school, the education, I don’t have custody over the children or the parents, I can’t control the gun laws – in fact, I’m prohibited from regulating guns . . . I don’t mind being primarily held responsible for reducing violence and crime, but I can’t be the only one. Other parties need to be held accountable.”



Jim Strickland, Mayor, Memphis, TN

One mayor said there are two primary types of violence: mass shootings and personal conflict, which is often a person using a gun in retaliation. Other mayors added that there is also violence against police and violence committed by police.

A few statistics that were shared from the past year:

- 648 mass shootings
- About 20,000 deaths from firearms (not counting suicides)
- 16.5 million guns were purchased
- A 12% increase in hate crimes
- Black individuals experience 12X greater police violence than white individuals

One mayor said that 20 years ago, there weren’t guns on the streets and it was rare to arrest someone with a gun. Now, it’s unusual to arrest someone who doesn’t have a gun.

Mayors offered several reasons for these statistics:

- A culture of violence
- Moral depravity – the morals in the country have changed
- Self-protection when people feel threatened
- The quantity and types of guns available
- Guns have become a status symbol, just as high-end sneakers were in the 1990s
- Individuals who are unable to control their emotions

Mayors are attempting to reduce violence in their communities by pursuing the following strategies:

- **Strengthening laws to keep violent criminals in jail.** Mayors expressed frustration at criminals with long criminal records who serve minimal sentences and are back on the streets, committing violent crimes.

“We should have zero tolerance for violence, especially violence that results in death.”

- **Breaking the cycle of retaliation.** Acts of violence often involve an individual retaliating to seek vengeance after a previous act of violence. Mayors described trying to break this cycle by assuring victims that the city will bring criminals to justice, trying to prevent an act of retaliation. Cities are also trying to identify when retaliation may take place and intervene to counsel an angry person not to retaliate. Several mayors described talking with teens after a shooting – in the hospital or at a funeral – to encourage them not to retaliate. Another mayor described a curriculum targeting young people to help them develop skills to peacefully resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.

“Cities need to get to young people and engage earlier . . . from a prevention standpoint.”

- **Reducing the number of guns on the streets.** Most mayors would like to see laws changed to restore the ban on assault weapons (which were effective) and to institute background checks (which 98% of the US population supports). Mayors also described efforts to recover guns and destroy guns in their communities, with some communities taking hundreds of guns off the streets.



Randall L. Woodfin, Mayor, Birmingham, AL

“The reality is that we as a country have not gotten to a point where we value the sanctity of American lives over American guns.”

Another mayor responded that efforts to change guns laws are unlikely to be effective, since criminals don’t obey laws. “We can make whatever laws we want; they aren’t going to obey them.”

- **Targeting the gun supply chain.** This includes targeting gun manufacturers and gun sellers through litigation, similar to how litigation efforts targeted the cigarette and auto industries.



“Mayors are the people who lead. We have to be unafraid to lead on this issue, even though we know it’s going to cost some of us our jobs.”



Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, Baltimore, MD

- **Reforming police departments.** One mayor described a collaborative reform effort that was transformative for her police department and city. The idea is for the police department to look like the city, which might mean increasing the number and percent of Black or Hispanic police officers.

“I would encourage mayors to take a look at what your police department looks like . . . Our police department made great strides in hiring people who are reflective of the community . . . and we have had a transformative change with community engagement.”



Kimbley Craig, Mayor, Salinas, CA

Another community established a Violent Crimes Task Force with two sergeants and five police officers. The group has arrested dozens of prolific violent offenders, developed strong cases to get longer sentences, and increased seizures of fentanyl.

- **Improving mental health access.** One mayor explained how his city increased access to a mental health facility that provided an option for the police to use in helping individuals get mental health care.



Cassie Franklin, Mayor, Everett, WA

The other major crisis today is drugs.

In addition to guns and violence the other major crisis wreaking havoc in cities is opioids, especially fentanyl. While some mayors see more efforts to address the opioid crisis than the gun crisis, opioids still remain a crisis.

One mayor said that over the past three years his community had 36 deaths due to guns and 370 deaths due to drugs.

“Fentanyl is a greater risk to us than anything else that we’re facing in our community.”

Economic Growth Across Sectors

Overview

As the war in Ukraine continues, there is a strong determination and belief in Ukraine that “there’s going to be a tomorrow.” But to build the country’s future, it is first necessary for Ukraine to defeat Russia. Ukraine has enormous resolve but needs ongoing support and military hardware from the West. While US support for Ukraine wanes, mayors can lend their voices to advocate for Ukraine, can encourage the country’s leaders to provide Ukraine needed military hardware, and can continue encouraging their communities to supply humanitarian aid.

Context

Diverting from the planned discussion about economic growth, this session instead focused on the future of Ukraine. A representative from Kyiv provided an update and US mayors discussed ways that America can support Ukraine.

Key Takeaways

There are important policy differences between Ukraine and the US.

After observing the previous discussions among US mayors about guns and violence, as well as the many other challenges facing US mayors, Kyiv’s Deputy Mayor explained that the laws in Ukraine (prior to the invasion by Russia) did not allow citizens to carry guns or own assault rifles.

Immediately following Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the government distributed guns to citizens, with no background checks and without any vetting. It was an act of necessity but also an act of trust. This decision has helped Ukraine repel Russia’s attack. Also, interestingly, the crime rate in Kyiv and across Ukraine has plummeted; there has been no crime at all.

A US mayor pointed out the key difference between Ukrainians and Americans having guns is that Ukrainian citizens have a sense of purpose in using guns to defend their country while many Americans with guns lack a sense of purpose.

“When we talk about arming the citizenry . . . the citizens [in Ukraine] had a purpose to defend their country . . . what’s lacking on the streets [of America] is people don’t have hope. They don’t feel purpose in their lives. When you don’t have purpose, you need power.”



Konstantin Usov, Deputy Mayor, Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukraine is determined and optimistic—but continues to need Western military support.

A Ukrainian song that embodies the spirit of the Ukrainian people states, “You can steal our dreams. You can kill our hopes. You can’t break our will.” Ukrainians have enormous resolve and are adamant that their will is unbroken.

“We are going to fight as long as we have enough men, as long as we have enough hardware . . . in terms of hardware, we’re 100% dependent on Western support.”

Mayors expressed strong support for Ukraine, with several noting that they had many Ukrainian immigrants in their community. These individuals are hard-working, entrepreneurial, and contribute greatly to their communities.



Nadine Woodward, Mayor, Spokane, WA



Mayors brainstormed ideas to raise additional funds for humanitarian aid for Ukraine. As an example, one mayor suggested that his city could contribute \$1 per resident to Ukraine, and he invited other cities to join this effort. Other mayors mentioned religious or nonprofit organizations to direct this funding to that are supporting Ukraine and/or Ukrainian refugees.



Steve Williams, Mayor, Huntington, WV

Ukraine is most grateful for all humanitarian efforts and for assistance to Ukrainian refugees. However, most importantly, what Ukraine needs is military hardware to win the war against Russia. The military hardware that has been provided to date has been essential, but additional hardware is needed.

It is Ukraine's perspective that Russia is no longer a great nation. Russia's military and cyber-force are overrated. Russia is dumb and disorganized. Their strategy is simply to throw bodies at Ukraine.

“Ukraine does not ask for any foreign army to fight our fight. This is our fight . . . We are resolved to fight and end this . . . whatever hardware we’ve been getting, we’re grateful for it. It allowed us to survive. Whatever we have not yet been provided—and there is a huge list—this unprovided hardware has enabled Russia to go on.”

A US mayor pointed out that the commitment of the US population can wane. Therefore, for those in the US who understand the situation in Ukraine and the importance of Ukraine, it is essential not to abandon Ukraine. Mayors have a role to play in helping sustain America's commitment to Ukraine.

“If someone wants to know what they can do to help [Ukraine], tell them, ‘Do not abandon this.’”

The experience in Ukraine illustrates certain advantages to leading during a crisis.

No leader would choose to be involved in a crisis of the magnitude of the war in Ukraine. However, those in leadership in Ukraine have observed, “It’s actually much easier to exercise power, govern, and solve problems when a crisis is as obvious as this.” Politics and bureaucracy disappear. There is alignment among leaders, government officials, and the public. Everyone is focused on the same mission.

“Suddenly, all of the politics disappear.”

A challenge for mayors is to create the sense of mission, purpose, and alignment in communities in the absence of an existential crisis.



Reflections on Transitions – Mayors in the Afterlife

Overview

No one is a mayor forever. While some mayors may serve for 20 years or more, many mayors serve for four or eight years and then transition to what's next. This transition can at times be difficult, as mayors have grown accustomed to being in the spotlight and have been consumed by their mission as mayor.

But former mayors who have made this transition have been able to find purpose and fulfillment in a multitude of other ways. These include serving on boards, working on initiatives targeting causes such as homelessness, writing, speaking, and advising other mayors. It is possible to transition to what's next while remaining engaged and continuing to have impact.

Context

Current mayors whose terms will soon end shared their thoughts as they contemplate transitioning to other roles, and emeriti mayors who have already transitioned to what's next reflected on their experiences.

Key Takeaways

As current mayors contemplate transitions, they are seeking purpose and other public service opportunities.

Several mayors near the end of their terms shared both specific and general thoughts about the future transition. One current mayor who is leaving office due to term limits may continue his public service career by running for governor, which is a pathway that has been pursued by other former mayors.

One mayor who plans to step down after eight years in office isn't sure what he will do next. However, in whatever he does next he hopes to feel the same sense of purpose and mission that he has felt as mayor. Others who have transitioned from serving as mayor to other roles provided assurances that it is possible to feel purpose and impact, though the day-to-day responsibilities will be quite different.

"All of us who have served as mayor have that sense of being all-consumed by the mission, every minute of your day . . . it gives you a deep sense of meaning . . . the thing I'm most anxious and apprehensive about leaving this job is leaving that feeling of purpose."

Luke A. Bronin, Mayor (2015-2023), Hartford, CT

Mayors who have left office have interest in seeing their key initiatives sustained.

In looking back on their time in office, mayors—especially those who served multiple terms—take great pride in the most important initiatives and want to see that work continue on.

- In Anaheim, Tom Tait campaigned on a platform of kindness and led based on kindness. The schools in Anaheim were recognized for performing one million acts of kindness. This culture of kindness in the city and in the schools has continued even after Tait is no longer mayor.



Tom Tait, Mayor (2010-2018), Anaheim, CA

"Being mayors, I think we all underestimate the value or the power of the bully pulpit. . . it's very, very powerful and can change the culture."

- In Oakland, during Libby Schaaf's time as mayor, the city experienced the most sustained period of the fewest murders in Oakland's history. While the city regressed during Covid, the success that had been achieved is a reminder of what is possible.



Libby Schaaf, Mayor (2015-2023), Oakland, CA



- In Oklahoma City, Mick Cornett's successor was his chief of staff, who has continued and completed important initiatives that began when Cornett was mayor.
- In Pittsburgh, Bill Peduto inherited a financial crisis and a crisis in governance. Under his leadership, Pittsburgh experienced a complete turnaround. The trend of population loss has been reversed, city revenues have grown significantly, homicides have fallen, and Pittsburgh is back on the global map as a city of innovation. Based on the changes initiated under Peduto, this momentum has continued even after Peduto left office.



Bill Peduto, Mayor (2014-2022), Pittsburgh, PA

Not all mayors leave office by their own choice; in some instances existing mayors lose elections. Mayors and other former elected officials at the Yale Mayors College stressed that if you win, you want to be an inspired leader, and if you lose, lose graciously, transfer office peacefully, and make sure your supporters know there is now a new office holder.

Mayors who have transitioned to what's next are finding fulfillment.

Mayors who have successfully made the transition from serving as mayor to the next chapter in life offered lessons and advice to other mayors.

- **Find something you enjoy.** One former mayor, who had enjoyed serving as mayor, said he knew he would miss being mayor but thought it was important to find something to do that he enjoyed just as much. He has written a book, speaks around the world, and finds this chapter in life satisfying and fulfilling.

"I don't miss it because I love what I'm doing now just as much [as when I was mayor]."

- **Have a shorter time horizon.** A former mayor reflected that previously he was always thinking about the future in planning his career or thinking about his city. He admitted that the first few years out of office were difficult. Now, as a former mayor, he no longer thinks about his life and career five or ten years in the future. He finds shorter-term projects to work on and people to work with.

"My magic moment was when I decided to shorten up my time horizons a little bit and pick things that I can make an impact on and go places where I was welcomed . . . where I could help maybe a little bit more in the shorter term."

Professor Sonnenfeld saluted current and former mayors as heroes and people of action who are "net producers in life, not net consumers." He commended the former mayors who have made the difficult transition from being "like the orchestra conductor" and have reinvented themselves to engage, lead, and contribute to society in other ways.

He also noted the amazing contributions of many older individuals, in their 80s and even 90s, now and throughout history. This ranges from Benjamin Franklin and Charles de Gaulle to Mitch McConnell, Nancy Pelosi, and President Biden. The accomplishments of these individuals show that former mayors can still make meaningful contributions for many years after leaving office.