

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

CEO SUMMIT

## Yale Mayors College

The Yale Club of New York City | June 7, 2022

### LEADERSHIP PARTNERS



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

*Chief Executive Leadership Institute*

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# Greatness through Crisis – Surge and Survival

## Overview

Warsaw, Poland's Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski described how Warsaw has dealt with the unprecedented crisis of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees entering Poland. Without the support of a national strategy from Poland's central government, Mayor Trzaskowski led Warsaw to take the initiative to develop its own strategy. This strategy consisted of mobilizing in the short term to welcome refugees and provide humanitarian assistance. For the longer term, Warsaw faces challenges in enhancing its infrastructure to provide education, healthcare, and social services to hundreds of thousands of people.

The way that Mayor Trzaskowski has led during this crisis is a model for other mayors in facing a host of crises.

## Key Takeaways

### Europe, and especially Poland, is experiencing the most significant refugee crisis since WWII.

In a previous migration crisis in 2016, at its peak, about 200,000 people entered Europe in a month. But just in March 2022, Warsaw has had 300,000 refugees, many of them women and children. Warsaw's population surged almost 30% in just a few weeks.

There has been incredible solidarity in Warsaw to support these refugees, with many citizens taking refugees into their homes, and strong support from non-governmental organizations. The attitudes of people in Warsaw are that "Ukrainians are fighting for our freedoms. They are fighting for the stability of Europe."

### Warsaw has dealt with this crisis in phases.

The first phase focused on managing the influx of people and providing humanitarian assistance. Warsaw created reception points and focused on providing accommodation, food, medicine, and mental health support. Even though Warsaw was somewhat prepared and expected some type of an event, the scale and magnitude of the crisis was greater than expected, causing Warsaw to initially be overwhelmed. Also, Mayor Trzaskowski said that the Polish central government had no strategy or plan.

The second phase is dealing with the long-term effects of having hundreds of thousands of new residents. Infrastructure is needed to provide education, healthcare, and social services.

### Mayor Trzaskowski offered insights on how he has led during this crisis.

In response to multiple questions about how he has managed and led in this crisis, Mayor Trzaskowski shared the following thoughts:

- **He was personally involved.** He was visible, on the ground, and hands on. He could see what was happening on the ground and people saw him.



Rafal Trzaskowski, Mayor, Warsaw, Poland

- **He set up a horizontal crisis group.** This group brought diverse expertise and enabled sharing responsibility.
- **He prioritized and delegated.** A crisis can't be managed by an individual mayor, especially a crisis that stretches on for months. It is necessary to prioritize, decide where to be personally engaged, and delegate to the crisis team.
- **He took initiative.** He lacked confidence in the strategy, plans, and capabilities of the central government and took the initiative to act.
- **He took care of himself.** Even during this crisis, Mayor Trzaskowski got rest and exercise, saw his family, and read.

**"My advice [to other mayors] is don't wait for the central government. Don't wait for the federal government; just do it on your own."**

—Rafal Trzaskowski, Mayor, Warsaw, Poland

Several US mayors asked how Mayor Trzaskowski has dealt with dissent among his population in providing services and assistance for the refugees, since dissent is a common issue faced by US mayors. Mayor Trzaskowski said that dissent has been relatively low, since most Poles are unified in the support and compassion for the Ukrainians. But when dissent exists, Mayor Trzaskowski tries to focus on dialog and education so the dissenter feels heard but also so that they are educated and understand what Warsaw is doing and why.

Real-time polling among attendees at the Mayor's College shows strong support for Mayor Trzaskowski and for Poland. Among respondents, 96% said that Poland must be one of the most generous countries on the planet and 86% believe that Mayor Trzaskowski will surely be president of Poland someday.

## Legacies & Life Stage – Growth, Culture, and Character

### Overview

Austin, Texas Mayor Steve Adler described the factors driving Austin’s tremendous growth and discussed how Austin’s approach to issues such as guaranteed basic income and homelessness are driven by the city’s people and culture. Other mayors shared their differing approaches to dealing with these issues, equally affected by the unique cultures of the communities they represent.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for success. The problems of poverty, affordable housing, and homelessness may be similar in different cities, but the solutions will vary based on the community. However, there was recognition that mayors and communities can learn from the experiments, successes, and failures of others.

### Key Takeaways

**Austin has experienced tremendous growth while trying to preserve the city’s character.**

Austin Mayor Steve Adler said that Austin’s tremendous growth in recent years is driven by an innovation ecosystem that brings together makers, creators, and innovators. There are multiple incubators and accelerators in Austin helping entrepreneurial organizations build applications that have great value. Austin’s ecosystem, skilled workforce, diverse culture, and quality of life have attracted many talented people to move to Austin and have attracted companies such as Tesla to migrate there.



Steve Adler, Mayor, Austin, TX

With the massive amount of development that has occurred, Austin wants to be deliberate in managing growth in order to retain the city’s unique culture and character. And, as Austin grows, it is necessary to address issues such as the limited supply of affordable housing and lack of mid-skilled jobs for people without a four-year degree that pay \$60,000 to \$80,000 per year.

Former Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives Joe Straus said, “The success of Austin in recent years is unbelievable.” He noted that Austin is very different than many other communities in Texas and is often subject to criticism from state politicians, but Austin is a great success, has a tremendous growth rate, and has a significant tax base.



Joe Straus, Speaker (2009-2019), Texas House of Representatives

**While some of the challenges facing cities in Texas are similar, the solutions being attempted vary based on the community.**

Austin plans to initiate a guaranteed basic income pilot where 85 families receive \$1,000 per month for one year. The purpose of the pilot is to see if this initiative is efficient and effective at diverting people from homelessness. Austin has also decriminalized homelessness, taking away the blame from people who are homeless and acknowledging it is a failure of the city if Austin is not able to provide places for people to live. To address homelessness, Austin plans a \$500 million spend on infrastructure with a goal of getting to net-zero homelessness.

Ginger Nelson, Mayor of Amarillo, Texas – which is far from Austin both geographically and politically – said that guaranteed basic income and decriminalizing homelessness would not fly with her community. While she is watching the status and data generated from the initiatives in Austin, her community is supporting individuals who need help through a variety of social services.



Ginger Nelson, Mayor, Amarillo, TX



**Like Austin, several cities are experimenting with forms of guaranteed basic income, while like Amarillo, other cities are pursuing different solutions.**

Several mayors described pilot initiatives underway in their cities.

- **Oakland, California**, is running a pilot where 600 families receive \$500 per month for 18 months. The purpose of this study is to gather evidence to see what works.



Libby Schaaf, Mayor, Oakland, CA

- **Tacoma, Washington**, is running a pilot by providing \$500 per month to 110 families for 12 months. The families selected are working families, such as a single parent with children, where it is believed that \$500 per month may make a difference.
- **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, had planned to provide a guaranteed income program but when there was a change in administration, the new administration cancelled it in favor of “new priorities.”
- **New Orleans, Louisiana**, is piloting a program where 125 individuals, ages 16-24, will receive \$350 per month for 10 months on a Mastercard. This initiative provides much-needed unrestricted cash to individuals at a time when they need it most. The initiative is completely privately funded, with \$500,000 in funding from an organization supported by Twitter founder Jack Dorsey.



LaToya Cantrell, Mayor, New Orleans, LA

While most mayors are closely following these initiatives to see the data and results that are generated, some such as Christina Muryn, Mayor of Findlay, Ohio, don't see such initiatives being accepted in their more conservative cities. Instead, Findlay has a program called “Systems of Care,” where vulnerable families are identified and supported through various wraparound services from area nonprofits.



Christina Muryn, Mayor, Findlay, OH

**“You have to know your community.”**

—Christina Muryn

A technology-driven initiative being implemented in Pittsburgh is [BigBurgh.com](https://www.bigburgh.com). This website and app makes it easy for homeless people in Pittsburgh—approximately 50% of whom have cell phones—to seek assistance for any services they need, such as food or medication. This app can be used by individuals, but police officers and city employees can also use this site to immediately help people.



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

## Public Health & Public Officials

### Overview

While the pandemic garnered national headlines and much of the attention was about national policies, in fact, a tremendous amount of the responsibility for on-the-ground policies came from mayors, working in combination with local health officials. Due to the variety of policies and actions, there were tremendous differences in the results that were achieved per county and per zip code. The experience has provided valuable lessons that need to be learned and acted on to better manage future crises, which are inevitable. Among the lessons are needs for greater investment in public health, an updated playbook, and better preparation, practicing, and communication.

### Key Takeaways

#### All public health is local.

Albert Ko, Professor at the Yale School of Public Health, said that local public health and local leadership made a big difference in the pandemic's results. He said that data shows a 20X difference in death rates between zip codes, which is in part attributed to local decisions and local leadership. He reiterated that "all public health is local" and believes a key lesson from the pandemic is the need for additional investments in local public health infrastructure.



Albert Ko, Professor, Yale School of Public Health

#### Multiple lessons have been learned from the pandemic that need to be acted on at federal and local levels.

Saad Omer, Director of the Yale Institute for Global Health, offered the following observations on lessons learned.

- **A sober reflection is needed on the US's pandemic performance.** According to Omer, the US didn't perform very well overall, with a wide disparity in results. A few examples of poor performance include that the US came up with PCR testing but didn't come up with an effective system to manage it, and the US had the technology and know-how to make N95 masks, but struggled to scale mask production.

- **Vaccination success requires more than just technology; it also requires certain behaviors.** There was significant investment in the science to develop vaccination technologies, which was a success. But there was no investment in communication about vaccination, and there is significant vaccination resistance and a lack of public trust. One mayor recounted how his city was making significant progress on vaccine hesitancy when the J&J vaccine was suspended. This hurt the progress that was being made and momentum was never regained.
- **Both accountability and expertise are needed.** Accountability must reside with officials such as governors and mayors. But these leaders must be supported by experts with relevant expertise. In many instances, governors and mayors didn't have access to experts in making public health decisions.
- **It is necessary to earn and leverage trust.** In general, local state and local public health organizations typically have high levels of trust. However, trust was eroded during the pandemic. It is necessary to help local health organizations regain this trust.



Saad B. Omer, Director, Yale Institute for Global Health

#### There are steps that mayors can take to improve preparedness.

In response to a question from mayors about preparation for the future, Omer and Ko offered the following thoughts about how mayors can lead efforts to prepare their communities for the future, which involve investing in public health.

- **Have vaccination programs ready.** The starting point is seasonal vaccination programs which provide a foundation if additional vaccination is necessary.
- **Have local experts identified to tap as necessary.** It is best to have experts at the ready as needed.
- **Have a "whole of government" response ready.** This is a comprehensive, coordinated response involving all aspect of government.

- **Have communication plans ready and practice them.** In developing these plans, be familiar with and leverage resources such as CDC playbooks. Omer encouraged, “Practice, practice, practice.”

**“In crisis, mayors need to be executives, not politicians.”**

—Saad B. Omer, Director, Yale Institute for Global Health

While these plans make sense, participants observed that the CDC’s playbook proved outdated and needs to be revised. Also, beyond the scope of mayors, the entire healthcare industry needs to make a commitment to investing to prepare the workforce of the future.

In responding to a poll question, mayors feel confident that they have learned valuable lessons and are well prepared to better manage future pandemics. When asked if they have learned to manage future epidemics better, 100% of mayors agreed.

### Improvement is needed is communication from the federal government to local health officials.

Mayors were nearly unanimous in their disappointment with federal guidance for managing COVID at the beginning of the pandemic, and about half remain disappointed today.

Question	% Agree	% Disagree
I was disappointed by federal guidance over managing COVID THEN	90%	10%
I am disappointed by federal guidance over managing COVID NOW	52%	48%

From the perspective of business, Chairman of American Airlines Group Doug Parker said it was often difficult to understand rules and regulations. He also felt that nationally, the US has been slow to act even as circumstances changed and new information became available.



Doug Parker, Chairman, American Airlines Group

Dr. Ko observed that as the situation changed, “constructs from early on are no longer applicable.” At each stage of the pandemic—as is the case for any crisis—it is constantly necessary to ask what is the goal.

One area where improvement is needed is communicating with the public about CDC guidance. While people want clear, definitive answers, communication involves art. One mayor believes it is important to be honest, balance competing factors, and make people aware of uncertainties. Honest communication is how trust is built.



Luke A. Bronin, Mayor, Hartford, CT

Some mayors (about 50%) also expressed frustration with state-level communication. Mayors have advantages of being trusted and nimble, but mayors are also affected by the state-level communication. One mayor described how the governor of his state made no statewide decisions whatsoever and left it to each mayor to make their own decisions. The result was a complete patchwork of policies where one city would have one mask policy and right across the street would be another city or town with a completely different policy. This leads to great confusion for the public.



Leirion Gaylor Baird, Mayor, Lincoln, NE



## Economic Success & Community Cooperation

### Overview

Many communities are wrestling with problems of rising crime and decreased respect for the police. Among the solutions discussed were strongly supporting police officers – with no interest in the concept of defunding the police – but firing bad police officers and having the police enforce all laws, even relatively minor “broken windows” crimes. In addition, it is necessary to work with, and possibly pressure, police unions to support good officers, but not bad ones. There is also growing interest in initiatives that support police by taking some tasks off their plate, such as having a mental health force to deal with mental health issues or overdoses.

### Key Takeaways

**Too much of the discussion about crime is based on emotion, not logic.**

Nobel Prize-winning Professor Paul Romer said that many topics in America have become highly emotional, as opposed to driven by logic. This is in part because social media exacerbates polarization.



Paul Romer, Professor, NYU; 2018 Nobel Prize Winner in Economics

On the topic of crime, he sees two problems:

1. **Crime is getting worse.** The emotional reaction among progressives is to not enforce some laws such as shoplifting. This thinking fails to appreciate the social value of short sentences for crimes, which sends a signal to society and to criminals that such actions won't be tolerated. In San Francisco, Walgreens had shut down stores because the city had stopped enforcing shoplifting, which essentially encouraged theft. The logical way to prevent crime from worsening is to enforce laws and arrest people, even for relatively minor crimes.
2. **Some cops are brutal.** Not all, but some. This is not acceptable. But these officers are protected by police unions. They must be fired.

In Professor Romer's view, it is logical to enforce small crimes and to no longer allow brutal police officers. It isn't about convicting these officers; it is about getting rid of them. At the same time, while enforcing minor laws and getting rid of bad officers, it is necessary to more actively advocate for and support the police.

**“You can support the police and you can hold the police accountable.”**



Adrian Perkins, Mayor, Shreveport, LA

A mayor from the Midwest doesn't see the issues that Professor Romer raised. He doesn't see any mayors abandoning enforcement of laws. He sees issues of resources and prioritization, but not abandonment. He also doesn't see strong unions protecting bad police officers.



Quinton D. Lucas, Mayor, Kansas City, MO

**It is important to distinguish between police officers and unions.**

Several mayors agreed with Professor Romer about the protection of bad police officers by the unions, and the general difficulty of dealing with the unions. One mayor noted that the public doesn't see a difference between the “police” and the “police union.” A mayor mentioned that during COVID, when all city budgets were cut, the local police union said, “They defunded the police,” even though the police budget was cut 2% while other budgets were cut 10%.



Victoria Woodards, Mayor, Tacoma, WA

**“We have to separate the police from police officers.”**

However, there are examples of mayors who have successfully fired bad police officers, with the support of the union. This shows that the relationship with the police union varies by geography and it can be possible to work with unions to get rid of bad officers.

**No mayors have an interest in defunding the police.**

Multiple mayors, particularly Democrats, said that there is absolutely no interest in the idea of “defund the police.” This is a narrative that has been created to try to put Democrats on the defensive, but it is a fiction.

However, while there is no interest in defunding the police, there is a recognition that the police are asked to do too much. Several communities are piloting or adopting ideas such as a “mental health force” where mental health experts, instead of police officers, focus on mental health issues and overdoses. This provides better service for mental health matters and frees up police officers for other matters.

Louisville, Kentucky Mayor Greg Fischer said that mayors are in an incredibly difficult situation. There are people in the community saying defund the police, and there are difficult police unions. There are crime and protests. As the mayor, it is essential to understand and honor the pain and suffering in the community; it is necessary to support the police; and it is essential to be the calm adult in the room, when there is so much emotion. Sometimes it feels like you are just trying to survive the day. But every city and every mayor are just a moment away from a crisis on any given day because emotions are so high. In Louisville, the union finally accepted that change was necessary. One result of working with the union was to increase both pay and accountability.



Greg Fischer, Mayor, Louisville, KY

**Employers can play a role.**

Public safety is not solely the responsibility of mayors and the police; the business community also plays a role. A representative of a major employer asked the mayors what employers can do to help. Among the responses from mayors were:

- Bring employees back to work. Bringing employees back to workplaces will help local economies, send a positive signal, and help with safety. While COVID was previously the main driver for working remotely, safety is now a consideration for employers.
- Help eliminate poverty, since poverty is related to crime and social services.
- Help make sure that all young people graduate from high school—and can get jobs.



Roger Arrieux Jr., New York Managing Partner, Deloitte & Touche LLP

# How Leaders Make Meaning – Messaging for Public Trust

## Overview

In reflecting on the topics covered in previous sessions of the Mayor’s College, it is apparent that all of the challenges that mayors face are ultimately messaging challenges. Several mayors and media experts shared their thoughts on the most successful ways to effectively convey messages and narratives. Tips include building relationships with the local media, communicating directly with the public, and being authentic and human.

## Key Takeaways

**All of the issues that mayors face are ultimately messaging issues.**

In recapping the many issues that mayors face—discussed in previous sessions—a common theme was that these issues all involve messaging and narratives. Examples include:

- Combatting the narrative of “defund the police”
- Combatting anti-vax and anti-science narratives
- Dealing with people not trusting data, science, or institutions

These narratives all deal with a loss in public trust.

**Byron Brown’s reelection as Mayor of Buffalo shows the power of effective messaging.**

Byron Brown was the four-term incumbent mayor when he lost the Democratic primary. He decided to run for a fifth term as a write-in candidate. His messaging refuted misconceptions raised by his Democratic opponent and framed his opponent as an inexperienced candidate who didn’t understand how government worked, had never done anything significant, and supported defunding the police. His effective messaging led to being reelected for a fifth term as a write-in candidate.

**“Messaging is the most important thing.”**

—A media expert

Mayor Brown’s experience also shows tremendous perseverance and resilience at a difficult career moment, which is a common trait among mayors.

**Among the tips offered by media experts: build relationships with the local media.**

Media experts who have worked at the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, CNN, Gannett, and other media outlets and PR firms offered their advice to mayors on getting their message out.



Jeff Zucker, President (2013-2022), CNN

- **Build relationships with local reporters.** While trust of national media has decreased, local news continues to get the highest trust ratings. Several media experts suggested building relationships with local news anchors and regularly going into the studio for interviews, as well as working with local press on town halls. Don’t view local reporters as adversaries and don’t put up barriers; work with them.

**“I encourage politicians to have good relationships with the media.”**

Also, many local reporters are very young, just out of college, and overwhelmed. One mayor, who was previously a local reporter, advised, “Help them do their job.” They are dying for content. Give them news releases that contain stories and information. This will help them do their jobs and help you get your stories out to the community.



Byron W. Brown, Mayor, Buffalo, NY



Nadine Woodward, Mayor, Spokane, WA



- **Create and use your own communication channels.** Mayors were encouraged to communicate with the public directly—via social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as by posting news releases, videos, and other types of content. While working with the media is important, it is equally important to communicate directly. When doing so, don't spin; communicate the truth.

**“Among all layers of government, mayors are the least dependent on the news media to reach people.”**

- **Be authentic and human.** Several media experts who advise CEOs also advised mayors to “be out there” by communicating frequently, in good times and in bad. When communicating, be authentic and “show your humanity,” one advised. And, if you make a mistake, honestly acknowledge it, correct it, ask for forgiveness, and move on.



Steve Lipin, Founder, Chairman & CEO, Gladstone Place Partners

# If Mayors Ruled the World: Public Safety & Public Trust

A panel of mayors, current and former government officials, and other leaders focused on public safety discussed what can be done to improve public safety in the United States.

## Overview

There is outrage and heartbreak with the mass shootings that regularly occur in America, resulting in death and despair for countless families and communities. This is a uniquely American problem and there is deep frustration at the lack of action among politicians to take steps to address this unending nightmare. Yet, there are actions that individuals and organizations are taking that provide hope for improvement, turning the tide and saving lives.

## Key Takeaways

**There is outrage about continuing gun violence and mass shootings in the US.**

Mayors from Buffalo and Pittsburgh shared horrific accounts of mass shootings in their communities. The May 2022 tragedy in Buffalo involve a white supremacist murdering innocent people at a grocery store in a Black community. The 2018 shooting in Pittsburgh was at a synagogue, done by an antisemite. These events are devastating to families and communities and the effects are long lasting.

Former US Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson termed such events domestic terrorism, which is motivated by violent extremism. In all of these events, a common denominator is the prevalence of guns in society, something that is unique to the United States.

**“The common denominator is the prevalence of guns in our society.”**



Jeh C. Johnson, 4<sup>th</sup> US Secretary of Homeland Security

## Mayors as Leaders

One mayor acknowledged that every mayor lives on edge waiting for the next call about an unconscionable event in their community. For mayors such as Byron Brown in Buffalo and Bill Peduto in Pittsburgh, who had to field that unfathomable call, they were emotional, hurting, and angry. They knew well the places where these events had occurred and knew some of the individuals who had been killed.



Bill Peduto, Mayor (2014-2022), Pittsburgh, PA, and Joe Straus, Speaker (2009-2019), Texas House of Representatives

But, as Mayor Brown said, “In times like this, mayors have to stand up for their community.” Mayor Peduto said, “The first thing you do is you take care of those family members . . . the first thing we do is take care of one another.” These mayors, and many others, have repeatedly shown leadership by comforting families and communities. They have been calm and compassionate, holding their communities together and leading during crises.

“I was angry. I was hurt. I was grieving. But I knew I had to present an image of stability and strength to the community to hold the community together, so that anger did not bubble over in the community and the community would not turn on itself.”



Byron W. Brown, Mayor, Buffalo NY

The situation in many cities such as Oakland is different. Oakland has not experienced a mass shooting, but Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf said shootings happen there almost every day. In 2021, there were 134 people murdered in Oakland and there have been 49 murders in 2022. Each one is a devastating, unimaginable, everyday tragedy that doesn't make it into the news.



Greg Fischer, Mayor, Louisville, KY and Libby Schaaf, Mayor, Oakland, CA

### There is outrage about the lack of action by politicians to address this issue.

Collectively the panelists feel despair and pessimism that the gridlock in the federal government has prevented action being taken. One mayor told of how in the aftermath of one prominent mass shooting a bipartisan group of mayors and police chiefs went to Washington D.C. to meet with several Republican senators. They were only given minutes and were told the Senate waits for the White House (then under President Trump) to say what they were willing to accept. Therefore, no legislation would occur.

Others expressed dismay that elected officials were unwilling to take any position based on morality or virtues, but acted solely based on their political career.

Multiple panelists commented that while the Second Amendment protects the right to bear arms, no right is unlimited. One mayor reflected that the current situation couldn't possibly be what the framers of the Constitution had in mind when they crafted the Second Amendment.

**"I find it really hard to believe that the framers of the Second Amendment would look at the slaughter of our children, look at the violence happening in our cities, and say, 'Yeah, that's what we had in mind when we wrote the Second Amendment.'"**

While skeptical about Congress, Secretary Johnson said that breaking the political gridlock requires some type of a gamechanger. He put forth the idea of showing images of the victims of mass shootings (only with the permission of victims' families). He knows that such images would be disturbing – as are photos of people in German concentration camps – but images can make a difference and can move people emotionally. Perhaps images can be a gamechanger.

In a real-time poll among Summit participants, 80% agreed with the idea of showing images of mass shooting victims as a way to gain public support for gun restrictions.

### Foreign Perspective

A participant from China said that individuals in China are not allowed to have weapons, including knives. Possession of weapons can lead to arrest and prosecution. So, guns and gun violence are not a problem in China. However, this raises the question, "Do you want to live in such a country?"

This individual commented that America gave individuals the right to bear arms so that a dictator would not be able to take power to go to the extreme and impose his views. He wondered whether the rulers in North Korea, Cuba, and Russia would exist if those citizens had the right to bear arms. He said, "There are people out there in the world who are envious of America." He can also see advantages related to national security if citizens bear arms, making it difficult for a country to be invaded. At the same time, it seemed to this individual that there are some rules and regulations that America should have introduced years ago, such as bans of military rifles and background checks.

### There is enormous concern about the amount of hate in society.

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, shared data indicating that the number of antisemitic incidents in 2021 was at record levels and is often attributed to white supremacists who subscribe to conspiracies and the great replacement theory. He said there has been a normalization of extremism – with 150 extremist candidates in the US running for a wide range of positions – and a rationalization of violence.



Alinor Sterling, Attorney at Law, Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder and Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO & National Director, Anti-Defamation League

However, he noted that this is a bipartisan issue, with extremists on both the far right and far left. Addressing problems of conspiracies, extremism, and violence – and preserving our democracy – requires involvement from all parties.

**"The reality is that the problem of hate is a bipartisan issue."**

A Christian leader termed hate and violence as a “pan-partisan problem.” His organization has condemned acts of violence against anyone for any reason, including violence or hate speech against gays and lesbians. He believes there is a missed opportunity for left and right cooperation to stamp out hate.

**Despite the enormous barriers, there are actions that can be taken that can make a difference.**

Among the actions discussed were legislation, litigation, and business leadership.

**Legislation**

New York City Mayor Eric Adams acknowledged, “Gun laws haven’t kept up,” and several panelists and participants stressed the need for gun control legislation, especially at the federal level.



Eric Adams, Mayor, New York City

In the aftermath of the most recent tragic incidents, Senator Richard Blumenthal expressed hope that Congress will be able to make progress on gun-related legislation, driven by the metric of saving lives. Legislation being considered may include some form of background checks and red flag laws.



Richard Blumenthal, US Senate, State of Connecticut

While skepticism is high, some with knowledge of the political process and of the key players in the Senate who are negotiating legislation are hopeful of finding some common ground on a compromise.

**“I’m somewhat optimistic that what Senator Blumenthal said was possible is really possible.”**

**Litigation**

Families of victims of the Sandy Hook school shooting recently settled a lawsuit brought against gunmaker Remington Arms for \$73 million. Even though gunmakers have federal immunity from product liability, this is an example of successfully going after gunmakers in state court. Alinor Sterling, who represented the Sandy Hook families, said the suit against Remington Arms sends a signal to insurance companies about the need to apply more scrutiny to the conduct of corporations that they ensure. It won’t be the last example of litigation as a strategy, as there will be future suits brought against gunmakers in several states.

**Business Leadership**

There was also recognition that companies – acting individually and collectively – can make a difference. Examples were cited of courageous policy changes by Dick’s Sporting Goods and Walmart, as well as policies enacted by financiers not to represent gunmakers.

Another step companies can take is to monitor where ads get placed as part of automated programmatic advertising. Often ads, and significant ad dollars, are unknowingly supporting dangerous sources of misinformation. This is a problem that can be fixed, depriving misinformation sources of important revenue.

**“As the CEO, I must take action where I can. Each of us has the ability to do that.”**

While there are no fast or easy solutions, through legislation, litigation, and business leadership – along with the sustained local leadership of mayors – there remains hope about changing the tide and decreasing the tragedies in America’s cities and streets.