

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

CEO CAUCUS

Yale Mayors College

The Secondary Business Effects of the Primary Election Season:

Lessons on Guiding Investor, Workforce, Customer,
& Community Harmony

Washington, DC | March 5, 2024



Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive Leadership Institute

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Welcome/Introductions

Overview

The 10th Yale Mayors College, held in Washington DC on March 5, 2024, brought together about 40 mayors from across the United States. The Yale Mayors College was led by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld of the Yale School of Management.



Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, Yale School of Management

Mayors engaged in dialog with a senior White House advisor focused on community engagement; with business leaders focused on entrepreneurial startups and turnarounds; with law enforcement leaders who work at the state and federal levels, including representatives from the FBI and the Capitol Police; with cybersecurity experts, including the Deputy National Security Advisor; and with election experts who are working to safeguard the upcoming elections.

Context

In introducing themselves, each mayor shared where they are from, how long they have been in office, how many times they have attended the Yale Mayors College, and something unique about their city.

Key Takeaways

The Yale Mayors College brings together a tremendous diversity of mayors.



Maria Rivera, Mayor, Central Falls, RI

The mayors at the Yales Mayors College represent tremendous diversity in terms of gender, race, age, religion, political affiliation, size of city, length of service, professional background, and more.

Mayors attended from the east and west coasts, from both the southern and northern borders, and from all points in between.

The mayors in attendance represent large cities and small towns and come

from red and blue states, as well as blue cities in red states and red cities in blue states. It is virtually impossible to know the political party of mayors, as mayors tend to be apolitical problem solvers.

Some mayors are in their first year in office, and this is their first Yale Mayors College, while others have served multiple terms and are in their last year in office. One mayor has been in office for 33 years and several mayors have attended all 10 Yale Mayors Colleges.



Kimbley Craig, Mayor, Salinas, CA

Some mayors serve full time, while for others, being mayor is (supposedly) a part-time position. The mayors in attendance have backgrounds as lawyers and business owners, entrepreneurs, educators, and firefighters. One mayor is a vascular surgeon, another is a therapist, and another is an award-winning restaurateur.

Mayors are extremely proud of their cities and the exciting activities taking place in them.

In each mayor's introduction, the love for and pride in their city was evident. Mayors touted that their city won the Super Bowl, was named the country's happiest city, is the home of Snoopy, and will be hosting the 150th Kentucky Derby.

Mayors also described with pride the amazing technological innovations taking place in their cities related to clean energy, transportation, affordable housing, surgical robotics, and more. Several mayors mentioned the growing role that advanced manufacturing is playing in their cities.



Leonardo Williams, Mayor, Durham, NC

Mayors proudly mentioned successful initiatives in their cities focused on strengthening the community by focusing on characteristics like kindness, compassion, and diversity.

Returning mayors see other mayors as trusted resources.

Several mayors commented that being a mayor can be a difficult, lonely job. Those mayors who have attended the Yale Mayors College for multiple years have built a community of trusted mayoral colleagues from across the country whom they can turn to as sounding boards. Mayors know what other mayors are going through, can listen, and can provide great advice.



Leirion Gaylor Baird, Mayor, Lincoln, NE

How Mayors Guide Communities Through Electoral Season (Border Control/Immigration; Secure Elections; Public Safety/ Community Harmony; and Reliable Infrastructure)

Overview

The Biden Administration understands and appreciates the critical role that mayors play and the skills that mayors have at building relationship and getting things done. That's why the Administration has brought so many former mayors into the Administration and why the Administration is so focused on engaging mayors and supporting mayors with resources.

The Administration has achieved positive economic results in terms of economic growth, job creation, low unemployment, increased wages, and declining inflation. But mayors encouraged the Administration not just to tout national "macro" results, but to focus on the "micro" results, which are the increased costs paid by individuals and families, and increased violence in specific cities. Just focusing on national results doesn't resonate with many voters.

On immigration and migrants, which are now affecting every city, mayors don't want photo ops; they want action.

Context

Former Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina, and current Senior Advisor to the President, Steve Benjamin, summarized some of the Biden Administration's key accomplishments, described the important role that mayors play in the Administration, took questions, and listened to comments from mayors.

Key Takeaways

Mayors play key roles in the Biden Administration because mayors know how to get things done.

In addition to President Biden bringing Steve Benjamin into the White House as Director of Public Engagement, he made several other former mayors part of his Administration, including Pete Buttigieg, Marcia Fudge, Tom Vilsack, and Mitch Landrieu.

President Biden likes putting mayors in important roles because he knows that mayors know how to get things done. Mayors excel at bringing people together and solving problems. Mayors are so effective because they are on the ground, listening to people, engaging in dialog, and seeing pain and suffering as well as aspirations and opportunities.

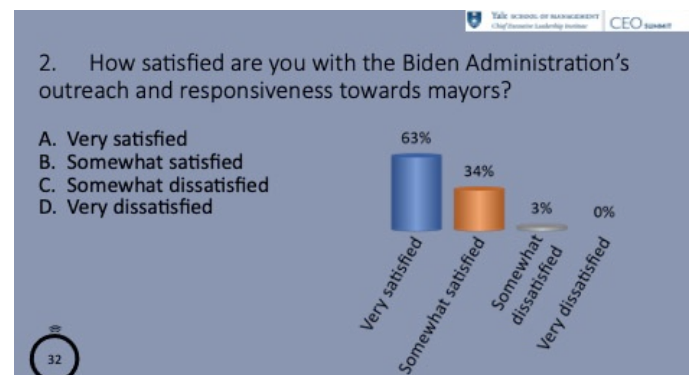
"Your work is more important than any other elected officials'."

The mayors in attendance agreed with these sentiments, noting the mayors have local insights, are responsive, and are accountable for execution. The mayor commended the Biden Administration for recognizing the important role that mayors play and for providing resources and support for cities.



LaToya Cantrell, Mayor, New Orleans, LA and Craig Greenberg, Mayor, Louisville, KY

Mayors College attendees are overwhelmingly satisfied with the outreach and responsiveness of the Biden Administration toward mayors.



Steve Benjamin, Senior Advisor to the President, The White House; Former Mayor of Columbia, SC; 76th President, US Conference of Mayors

The Biden Administration is proud of the progress that has been made, though mayors provided feedback on focusing on local results, not just national results.

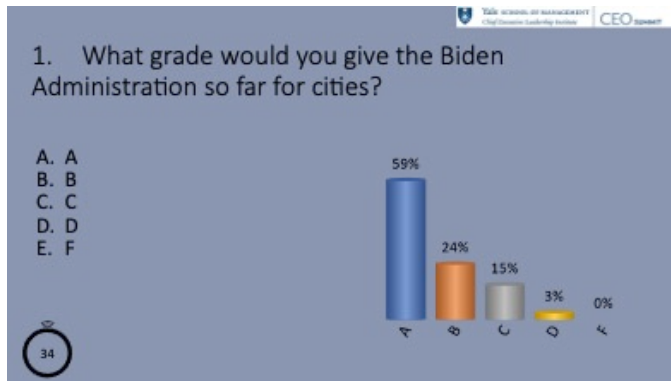
Four years ago, when the first cases of Covid were being detected, began a very difficult period. Lives and jobs were lost as the country experienced its first pandemic since 1918, the greatest economic disruption since 1929, and the greatest social unrest since 1968—all wrapped into one incredibly difficult moment.



Lily Mei, Mayor, Fremont, CA

Since then, the country has recovered and has experienced real successes. The American economy is strong, with sustained growth. Unemployment is below 4% and millions of jobs have been created. Inflation, which was at 9%, is now about 3% and is continuing to fall, and wages are rising. Violent crime is at a 50-year low, and several important pieces of legislation have been passed, including legislation that invests in infrastructure, clean energy, and climate change.

The majority of mayors give the Biden Administration good grades for the focus on cities, with 83% giving the Administration an A or a B.



However, mayors cautioned the Administration not to be consumed with national statistics. Even if inflation rates are declining, many consumers have still experienced significant cost increases on highly visible basic items such as eggs and drugs. Consumers become frustrated when they hear national politicians citing lower inflation, but they know their own cost of living has increased. The same logic holds for jobs and violence. The overall national statistics might be positive, but those struggling to find jobs or experiencing increased violence don't feel comforted.



Cassie Franklin, Mayor, Everett, WA

"Violent crime has doubled in my city. So it seems rather tone deaf to be talking about the national statistic."

Mayors want action on immigration, not just photo ops.

Twenty years ago, many mayors were sounding the alarm about migrants and immigration issues, saying that this was a crisis that needed to be addressed. But these mayors received little attention. Finally, this issue is getting attention, but there is still not adequate action coming from the federal government. One mayor said he is fed up by seeing the border visits by politicians and the photo ops. Instead of border visits he would like to see solutions.



John Giles, Mayor, Mesa, AZ

"There isn't a mayor in this room who hasn't been impacted by the migrant surge . . . what we're asking for is for people to treat this like a problem to be solved rather than weaponized."

When the mayor from a city bordering Mexico was elected in May 2023, about 50,000 migrants from 31 different countries crossed the border into his city in a 30-day period. His city rose to the occasion, partnering with all possible agencies and NGOs. Despite the large numbers of migrants and immense constraints, everything was organized and under control, and the city was not impacted by crime.

While this city was able to navigate through this crisis, the status quo is not adequate. All parties need to come together and agree that something needs to be done.



Alan Webber, Mayor, Santa Fe, NM and John Cowen, Mayor, Brownsville, TX

The Biden Administration is frustrated because there was a bipartisan solution that was agreed upon in the Senate that would have helped address many of the issues that are faced, which didn't move forward. It is a problem that needs to be addressed by Congress.

A mayor suggested that Congress should adopt an approach of having single-issue legislation, focused on very specific areas, instead of packing lots of different things into bills. For example, instead of having one bill that contains border security and Ukrainian aid, those bills should be separated so constituents can see if their elected representatives are truly focused on solving problems such as border security.

Innovation, Creation, and Revival: Greenfield and Brownfield Economic Development

Overview

Every mayor is focused on economic development. Typically, mayors identify the competitive advantages of their city and seek to build upon and leverage these advantages in attracting companies. Focusing on both startups (greenfields) while shoring up existing companies and saving jobs (brownfields) provides significant benefits for communities.

Challenges that mayors must confront include shortages of skilled talent, affordable housing, and capital. Mayors are making progress in addressing each of these challenges.

Context

Business leaders who focus on startups and turnarounds shared their perspectives on the key role that mayors play in economic development. Several mayors provided anecdotes and success stories of economic and workforce development.

Key Takeaways

The U.S. is seeing an increased geographic dispersion of talent and capital.

In previous decades, about 75% of U.S. venture capital investments went to companies in California, New York, and Massachusetts. This contributed to a brain drain in other communities as talent flocked to those locations.

But there are creative entrepreneurs in all geographies, which is driving a “rise of the rest” as startups are being created and scaled across the country. In the past 10 years, 1,400 new venture capital firms have been started outside of San Francisco. Advances in technology, along with the pandemic—which caused a rethinking about where people want to live—is spurring innovation across the country. The companies, industries, and jobs of the future are being created everywhere, as talent and capital are becoming much more dispersed.

This dispersion of talent and capital is being accompanied by a form of industrial policy that aims to foster an even greater dispersion of entrepreneurialism and to make access to capital more inclusive.

Examples of successes include incubators on college campuses. However, while college-based incubators are a rich source of ideas, students often lack capital and connectivity. New VC firms across the country can help address this.

Mayors can also play an important role. Mayors can articulate a vision of

entrepreneurship in a city, can use their bully pulpit to drive a sense of possibility and showcase successes, and can use their convening power to drive greater collaboration and connectivity.

“Mayors can drive a sense of possibility. . . so people believe they can start and scale in your city and don’t have to leave to get access to talent and capital.”

Mayors base economic development strategies on their city’s unique competitive advantages

In focusing on economic development, mayors often start by identifying their city’s competitive advantages to build on and leverage, while identifying shortcomings to be addressed.

For example, a competitive advantage in Tulsa is its skilled manufacturing, with expertise in aerospace, based on the city having the world’s largest commercial aviation maintenance facility. This competitive advantage is being leveraged in energy, logistics, and electric vehicles.

In Albuquerque, competitive advantages include sitting at the crossroads of the Southwest, being a hub for multimodal transport, and having inexpensive land. These advantages, along with economic incentives, helped attract a solar panel company operating in Singapore that wanted to reshore to the U.S. due to the Inflation Reduction Act. This reshoring will create 2,000 jobs in Albuquerque.

New Bedford, Massachusetts, has the largest commercial fishing port in the US, along with extensive know-how about ports and the water. This city also has abundant wind. This makes marine activity, wind turbines, and creation of an offshore wind innovation center natural fits. The city has secured extensive funding to enhance its port infrastructure, which will be a catalyst for additional economic activity.



GT Bynum, Mayor, Tulsa, OK



Tim Keller, Mayor, Albuquerque, NM

In every city, a key to economic development is talent and workforce development.

Mayors agreed that a key to attracting companies is having abundant talent. In many cities, there is a shortage of skilled talent, which requires investing in education and partnering with business.



Steve Case, Chairman & CEO, Revolution; Author, Rise of the Rest



Rita Ali, Mayor, Peoria, IL

In Tulsa, for example, attracting advanced manufacturing is the city's sweet spot, which requires that workers engage in lifelong learning. That's because just having a high school or college education won't be adequate in this era of rapid technological change and AI. Mayors and cities need to support lifelong learning.

In Santa Fe, New Mexico, the goal is not to attract a Tesla factory or investors; it is to grow from the grass roots. A specific goal is to combat intergenerational poverty by improving the lives of low-income kids who don't see future opportunities. Using a seven-figure grant, the city has established coding labs around the city where kids can learn to code. This provides access to modern middle-class jobs in areas such as digital entertainment.

"It's less about investing in companies and more about investing in people, particularly young people, and linking up education, training, and career opportunities."

Brownfield opportunities are as important as greenfield ones, but are often overlooked.

A brownfield activity involves turning around, restoring, and rebuilding an existing company. Often, mayors and economic development activities focus on attracting new companies as opposed to saving the companies and jobs already embedded in a city.

Saving existing companies and jobs shouldn't be overlooked. Mayors can play a role through rent abatements, property tax moratoriums, utility subsidies, and grants and loans that can be used for capital equipment. Mayors can also help on the labor front through creation of trade schools, which are essential for industrial turnarounds, along with apprenticeship programs.

Mayors can also help turnarounds by making introductions to larger companies in the area that might do business with the turnaround company and by encouraging local universities to partner with local

industrial companies, which often lack investments in R&D. Universities can be a source of innovation.

A former mayor with a business background looked at which companies in his city produced the most tax revenue; he viewed these companies as his top customers. As in business, he regularly called on these top customers about what their needs were and what the city could do to make their lives easier and better. Often, companies wanted better connections with the city's broader social ecosystem, which the mayor could orchestrate.

This mayor also suggested that when a city provides financial assistance, the city should assure that if the company has a positive financial exit, the city should share in the upside. "Government money shouldn't be dumb money."

Affordable housing is essential to both brownfield and greenfield development.

In many cities the cost of housing is extremely high, making it hard to attract workers. As a result, affordable housing is a top priority for many mayors.

"Housing our workforce is critically important. But I also think focusing on economic development is just as important, because if you build a bunch of housing, you need to have the jobs available."

Solutions are coming through state grants for affordable housing and through innovative modular housing solutions.



Lynn Tilton, Founder & CEO, Patriarch Partners



W. Reed Gusciora, Mayor, Trenton, NJ

Protecting Community Harmony and Public Safety Before, During, and After Elections

Overview

The public safety threats and challenges in the country have never been greater. In the face of these threats, collaboration among federal, state, and local law enforcement is essential—in preparing to safeguard the upcoming election and on an ongoing basis.

Mayors were encouraged to insist on coordination between various law enforcement bodies and on creation of a fusion center. Mayors were encouraged to meet and form relationships with their local FBI representatives.

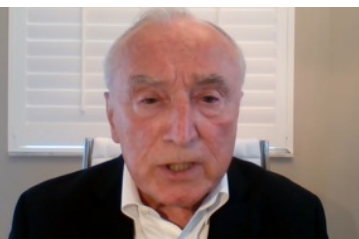
Also, while it is necessary to prepare for a crisis, when a crisis takes place, there is no script. Yet those mayors who have experienced unthinkable crises have summoned the ability to lead, communicate, and bring their community together.

Context

Law enforcement officials discussed the importance of policing, collaboration, and taking steps to safeguard the upcoming election. Mayors described their involvement in public safety and recounted what they did to lead through communities after violent incidents.

Key Takeaways

This is the most challenging public safety environment imaginable.



Bill Bratton, Former Police Commissioner, New York, Los Angeles, Boston

A law enforcement expert with five decades of experience views policing as indispensable in preserving our democracy. In the absence of policing on January 6, 2021, the US would have lost its democracy. On that day, one US Capitol Police officer was killed and 140 were injured. The US Capitol Police force did its job.

As we anticipate the upcoming election, the number of serious threats, concerns, and crises have never been greater. These threats require effective policing and strong leadership from mayors.

Tip: In anticipation of the election and in any crisis, mayors need to project boundless self-confidence.

One mayor described the importance of expressing thanks to police officers for their service. She has personally attended police briefings, met with officers, thanked them, and asked them to thank their families.



Natalie Rogers, Mayor, Santa Rosa, CA

Elected officials are at increased personal risk.

Never before have elected officials faced such significant risks. In addition to the violence at the US Capitol on January 6th, 16 states experienced significant threats, along with dozens of cities and many polling places.

The threats officials face are not limited to elections. In 2016, there were 1,000 to 2,000 threats against members of Congress. Since 2017, threats have risen exponentially. Today there are approximately 10,000 threats against members of Congress requiring investigation. And the threats to elected officials are not limited to members of Congress. One mayor described an attempt to assassinate him when he was shot at from 10-feet away.

“Being an elected official today is very different than it was years ago, and I think we’re headed down the path where it continues to get worse.”

Advice to mayors includes using intelligence provided by federal, state, and local officials, anticipating issues that could arise, and preparing.



Thomas Manger, Chief of Police, US Capitol Police

Tip: Elected officials can and should have security assessments done for their homes.

States are preparing for the upcoming election through partnerships.

As one example, the State of Connecticut’s Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security has begun coordinating with partners which include the Secretary of State, the FBI, local law enforcement, the Attorney General’s office, and other federal partners.

Unlike crises that arise unexpectedly, the election has a specific date and is being treated as a major event. To prepare, this summer there will be a statewide exercise in Connecticut to test emergency planning with various regional agencies and local entities, such as town clerks.



Ronnell Higgins, Police Commissioner, State of Connecticut



Tip: If a member of Congress is speaking in your city or doing anything related to their work which requires security from your police force, the US Capitol Police will reimburse your city.

The FBI is working closely with state and local officials to safeguard the upcoming election.

Three divisions of the FBI – the Criminal, Cyber, and Counterintelligence divisions – are working together closely to ensure free, fair, and safe elections. These divisions recognize that they can't work in silos.



Devin Kowalski, Chief, Criminal Division, FBI

- Criminal Division:** This division maintains the Election Crimes Coordination Program across the FBI's 56 field offices. As part of this program, FBI representatives connect with state and county election officials. The FBI works with the Election Threats Task Force at the Department of Justice to investigate and, if appropriate, charge individuals with election threats.

- Cyber Division:** This division monitors cyber threats and disseminates advisories. Current threats are coming from China, Russia, and Iran. Challenges also include cybercrime and ransomware.

- **Counterintelligence Division:** This division is looking for foreign influence, including undeclared activities of foreign governments that are not fully transparent.

Tip: Know who your local FBI field office representative is and contact them if you have questions or needs arise.

A suggestion for mayors and local law enforcement is to insist on a "fusion center." This is a central site where law enforcement and election officials can sit together and communicate in real time. A fusion center helps connect what can be a disconnected process.

Unfortunately, mayors must expect and prepare for violent events in their city.

A sad reality in the United States is the constant presence of violent events, usually involving guns. Multiple mayors have had to lead their cities through shootings involving multiple deaths.

One mayor recounted advice from another mayor on how to respond in a crisis: "Find your North Star." This North Star makes it possible to make impossible prioritization decisions during a crisis. This mayor's North Star started with victims' families, then the wounded

in hospitals, followed by the Jewish community (this event was a shooting at a synagogue), followed by the greater community.

"Your job is to bring everyone together . . . make sure that those in the most critical need have the most support."

Other mayors described the importance of communication during and after a crisis. A mayor whose city just experience a violent shooting focused on communicating that the threat is over, commending law enforcement and those who acted heroically, and encouraging people to take time and space to recover.

Another mayor whose city experienced a mass shooting said his messaging focused on conveying that the threat had ended, showing appreciation for law enforcement, and holding the community together. He emphasized reminding everyone about the city's values and character, lifting the community up, and moving forward as a community that cares about and embraces each other.



Quinton Lucas, Mayor, Kansas City, MO



Byron Brown, Mayor, Buffalo, NY

Mayors need to continue to speak out on the need to change gun laws.

One mayor commented that mayors ran for office to be proactive in leading change. He encouraged mayors to keep speaking up and talking about these terrible events, and the need for changes. While the climate is difficult for making changes to gun laws, mayors need to continue speaking up.

"It's our job as mayors to keep talking about it because it's in our cities that people are being killed by guns every day."

A former federal official who works in the gun space believes it is important for mayors to build relationships with and listen to gun owners. While there will always be some Second Amendment absolutists, there is a common ground building with responsible gun owners about red flag laws and other changes.



Craig Greenberg, Mayor, Louisville, KY

Rewiring Your Security in Your Wireless Communities – Cyber, Energy, and Infrastructure Reliability

Overview

The quantity and sophistication of cyberattacks has increased significantly, putting critical infrastructure in the US at risk. This includes water systems, electrical utilities, schools, hospitals, and other parts of the infrastructure often overseen by local officials. However, while the risks and threats have increased, many communities have not increased their cybersecurity efforts to keep pace. Some communities and leaders may have a false sense of security.

The good news is that it is possible to improve an organization’s cybersecurity by taking basic steps, such as changing passwords and adopting multi-factor authentication, that aren’t necessarily hard or expensive. The federal government has a wealth of resources, tools, best practices, and programs. The key is for local communities to make cybersecurity a greater priority and to take advantage of these resources.

Context

Federal cybersecurity leaders summarized the risks to critical infrastructure that exist and resources available to mayors and local communities to improve their cybersecurity.

Key Takeaways

Mayors are alarmed by the rise in cybersecurity attacks, though many feel well equipped to deal with them.

Polling shows that mayors are alarmed by the rise of cyber attacks on critical infrastructure but many mayors feel their communities are well equipped to deal with these attacks.

| Poll question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| I am alarmed by the rise of cybersecurity attacks on US infrastructure from hostile foreign nations | 81% | 6% | 10% | 3% |
| My community is well equipped to deal with cybersecurity attacks to our infrastructure | 3% | 48% | 34% | 14% |

A federal cybersecurity official expressed surprise at the confidence shown by the mayors about their cities’ ability to deal with cybersecurity attacks. This official even remarked that perhaps some mayors are a bit naïve about the cyber-readiness of their cities.

“Every day we see attacks on critical infrastructure across the country.”

Government officials explained that every day there are numerous attacks from hostile countries and criminals across the 16 sectors of critical infrastructure in the US. An official from a utility company commented that US companies – who also think they are well equipped to deal with cyberattacks – paid out tens of millions in ransoms in the past year after being held hostage by ransomware.



Caitlin Clarke, Senior Director for Cybersecurity & Emerging Technology, The White House



Maria Pope, President & CEO, Portland General Electric

The federal government has resources to help communities strengthen their cybersecurity.

Many of the attacks on critical infrastructure are preventable, at low or no cost, simply by practicing good cyber hygiene, such as changing passwords. The federal government sees a key to cybersecurity as partnership among the federal government, local governments, and the private sector.

To help local communities improve their cyber readiness, the federal government has rolled out several programs and resources, such as:

- Cybersecurity programs for schools and rural hospitals.
- Enhanced regulatory requirements for private companies that own and operate critical services.



Anne Neuberger, Deputy National Security Advisor, The White House

- Information on best practices, such as using multi-factor authentication.
- A two-page document that summarizes all of the federal cybersecurity programs available.

It is the hope of the cybersecurity leaders in the White House that mayors and other local officials will familiarize themselves with the resources and programs that are available and will increase their uptake and use of these programs in order to improve their community's security.

Mayors are learning lessons about cybersecurity failures, but admittedly can learn and do more.

One mayor described how an attack on his city's computer systems led to an assessment of the city's cyber-vulnerabilities and actions to strengthen the city's cybersecurity.

Another mayor learned valuable lessons from a damaging cyber attack inflicted upon another city. Among the lessons learned were the importance of purchasing cybersecurity insurance – which proved valuable when this mayor's own city was attacked – moving some systems to the cloud, which has enhanced protection, and creating offsite data centers to protect critical data.

Still, while mayors have learned important lessons, they acknowledged that they are not necessarily familiar with their city's level of security and are not familiar with federal programs available to help their city improve its cybersecurity.

Several mayors expressed appreciation to the federal government and state governments for the bountiful funds and resources flowing their way. But amid numerous conflicting priorities, ensuring greater cybersecurity has not necessarily been a top priority. Mayors remarked that based on the alarms sounded by these federal officials, perhaps cybersecurity needs to be a greater priority.



Protecting Democracy and Elections – Local Officials as National Heroes

Overview

Many people in the Republican party believe the 2020 president election was stolen, and a significant percent of the US population doesn't question the accuracy of elections. There are threats to election officials and there are scenarios – that sound like crazy conspiracy theories, but are possible – where the 2024 election could be stolen. This makes it imperative to safeguard the upcoming election and to do everything possible to ensure public trust in the election results. Trust comes through transparency and understanding how the process works.

Since elections take place at a local level and since mayors are so trusted in their communities, it is important for mayors to play an active role in building trust surrounding the upcoming election.

Context

Legal experts discussed threats to the upcoming election and the key role that mayors play in helping build confidence in the election system.

Key Takeaways

The recent Supreme Court decision about whether Trump can be on the ballot in Colorado disappointed some Constitutional experts.



Michael Luttig, Retired Judge, 4th Circuit Court of Appeals

The day before this Mayors College, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision that Donald Trump can remain on the ballot in Colorado and all other states. A former federal judge found the decision astonishing for not deciding the key constitutional question and for effectively deciding that Donald Trump will never be disqualified from holding the presidency. This former judge faulted the Supreme Court's logic and reasoning, and found the ruling inexcusable.

The election will go on and needs to be done correctly to assure public confidence.

A leading election attorney said that regardless of how the Supreme Court had decided the Colorado case and regardless of the outcome of various cases and investigations that are underway, there will be an election in November. (However, when the Electoral College convenes, Donald's Trump qualifications, based on his potential involvement in an insurrection, may still be subject to objections.)

What matters most to mayors and election officials at this moment – as well as to the public – is the accuracy of the election. This election will take place amid an erosion of public trust and at a moment when about one-third of the public doesn't have faith in the accuracy of

election results. This puts tremendous pressure on those who conduct elections to assure fair elections and accurate results.

It is important to realize there are 8,000 to 10,000 election officials in the United States. The typical official is a 50- to 64-year-old woman who makes \$50,000 per year. In 2017, these officials were informed they needed to protect our election infrastructure against China and Iran.

Election officials have seen a huge surge in threats against them. One out of three election officials reports being threatened. This is not a federal issue; it is a local issue.

"This is a local issue. When election officials are threatened, they don't call the FBI, they call 911."

Because of the pressure on election officials and the threats against them, resignations have soared. For the upcoming election, about one in five officials will be working their first presidential election. New officials are more likely to make administrative mistakes and are less aware of the resources available to assist them.

Those who denied the results of the 2020 election may take a different approach to try to steal the 2024 election.

In 2020, those who denied the results of the election attempted to use the courts to overturn the results. This approach was unsuccessful, as 60 different courts ruled against election deniers. The courts served as the guardrails of democracy. But these election deniers learned important lessons through their failed efforts. A key lesson was to keep the issue out of the courts.

Instead, in the House of Representatives, which is now under Republican control and where the body sets its own rules, it is possible that certain closely contested races might not be certified. This could allow Republicans to maintain control of the House. Then, on January 6, when the Electoral College vote occurs, the House can choose whether to certify the Electoral College results. If the Electoral College results are not certified, the election is thrown to the House to decide on the president. If this were to happen, Trump would be reelected.



Ben Ginsberg, Co-Chair, Pres. Commission on Election Administration



Liz Howard, Deputy Director, Democracy Program at Brennan Center for Justice



While this sounds like a farfetched conspiracy theory, it is plausible that the election could be stolen with no judicial review. (Those who envisioned this scenario also warned in advance of the 2020 election about what actually occurred but were written off as alarmists.)

What can mayors and others do to prevent this? Talk about this scenario with local Congressional representatives so they are aware of it and get them to go on the record stating they would never participate in such a scheme.

There are actions that can be taken to bolster local election systems.

Most important is to make the election system fully transparent. Full transparency means explaining how the election system works and allowing anyone to talk with election officials to understand the mechanisms and safeguards. Transparency breeds trust.

Mayors can play a role in providing transparency and increasing trust because people know, respect, and trust mayors. Mayors have

social capital and authenticity. What mayors can do is help explain to the public how elections work so citizens understand and trust the election process. This will help counter the avalanche of misinformation.

“The trust that people have in their local leaders and local officials outweighs the national level and national media. . . the trust they have in you is real.”



Olivia Troye, Former Homeland Security Advisor, The White House





Hindsight is 20/20 – Things I Wish I’d Said (or Done) When I Was Mayor

Overview

Former mayors, when asked what they would do differently, said they would better prepare for a crisis, would not spend so much time trying to please critics, would do more to connect with employees and citizens, and would try to engage in more self-care and be more attuned to challenges family members were facing.

While being a mayor is fulfilling, because it is such an intense, fast-paced, all-encompassing experience, life after being mayor – where the pace is much slower – can be a difficult transition. It is important to prepare for this transition and to expect the transition to take some time.

Context

Five former mayors shared their perspectives on things they wished they had done differently while mayor and how they see their role as a former mayor.

Key Takeaways

Former mayors shared wisdom for what they would do differently.

In offering advice to current mayors, these former mayors were reflective on what they would do differently.

- **Know your purpose and North Star.** Mayors stressed the inevitability that a crisis will arise, which will force difficult, urgent decisions. To make the best decisions under pressure, it is important to have defined your purpose and values up front. This will guide difficult decisions about priorities in a crisis.
- **Don’t take the bait from impossible-to-please critics.** Several mayors regretted giving so much time to and trying to please critics, which was a waste of time. There are some people who are difficult contrarians whom you can never please or win over. The best course of action is not to take the bait and not to waste so much time and energy trying to satisfy them.



Greg Fischer, Mayor, Louisville, KY (2011-2023)

“If you wouldn’t accept their advice, don’t take their criticism.”

- **Be a bold leader.** By nature, mayors tend to be pragmatic problem solvers. But communities and the country face significant challenges, which call for bold leaders. These former mayors advised to take on a few key issues and be bolder than you think you need to be.
- **Put a greater emphasis on the culture.** These mayors did focus on the culture and even ran campaigns focused on subjects such as kindness and compassion. However, they wished they had placed an even greater emphasis on changing the culture, because doing so can change communities and affect people’s lives. One mayor said mayors have a “secular pulpit,” where they can emphasize characteristics that matter, such as compassion.
- **Don’t rush.** One former mayor wished he had waited a bit before running for mayor to better understand his community. Also, he would also have slowed down during his first 100 days in office to listen and learn, as opposed to diving in so fast.
- **Spend more time forming connections.** Forming connections is a basic part of a mayor’s job, but too often this gets lost in the tasks and responsibilities of being the mayor. One former mayor wished he had spent more time interacting with city workers, not just managers. Another former mayor wished he had learned Spanish, at he had intended to do, as this would have helped him form better connections with many people in the community.



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



Adrian Perkins, Mayor, Shreveport, LA (2018-2022)



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



Richard Berry, Albuquerque, NM
(2009-2017)

• **Engage in self-care.** While these former mayors acknowledged that engaging in self-care is difficult, especially when working 18-hour days, it is important to allocate time to your physical and mental health. “Give yourself some slack,” said one former mayor.

It is also necessary to pay attention to and invest in the health of family members. One mayor made the conscious decision to avoid cocktail parties and dinners to be home with his family most nights. Other mayors described sacrifices that family members make and the need to be attuned to family members’ needs.

• **Prepare to no longer be mayor.** Transitioning from mayor to former mayor can be extremely difficult. Being the mayor means racing 100 miles per hour at all times. Mayors are constantly on the go and being the mayor means your mind is always working at top speed. It can be an adrenaline rush and can be addictive. Then, upon becoming a former mayor, the world slows down, immediately—which can be a difficult transition.

Former mayors suggested preparing for this day by thinking about how you want to invest your time and making plans to do things you previously weren’t able to do. Find causes to continue to support and worthwhile organizations to become involved in. One former mayor cited Jimmy Carter as an inspiration; he accomplished more after he was president than while president.

The role of a former mayor is to step back, be quiet, and support the current mayor.

When asked how former mayors should view their role, these former mayors were in strong agreement: “There is only one mayor at a time, and you aren’t it.” One mayor said, “Get off the stage and don’t talk to the media.” These former mayors agreed with the wisdom of remaining silent and not commenting on or criticizing the current mayor. However, if the current mayor reaches out, it is ok to share your thoughts in confidence.

A few current mayors shared stories of receiving messages of encouragement and support from former mayors. These messages essentially said, “I’m thinking of you. Let me know if I can help in any way.” Such messages were greatly appreciated.

One former mayor commented that based on the relationships he had built in his community, he wanted to continue to show up and support people, organizations, and causes that mattered to him, without stepping on the toes of the current mayor. Continuing to show up and lend support as a former mayor builds trust in the community.

Recommended Reading

Two books were suggested:

- *The Hero’s Farewell: What Happens When CEOs Retire* by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld
- *Your Next Season: Advice for Executives Transitioning from Intense Careers to Fulfilling Next Seasons* by Leslie W. Braksick and William R.K. Innes

