



**Remarks by Mayor Vincent Gray
Tribute to Mayors Series**

January 23rd, 2014

Mayor Vincent Gray: Well, first of all, let me say good evening everyone. Let me begin by thanking Mickey Ibarra for the leadership that he has provided. Isn't Mickey one of our finest leaders in this nation who brings us together? Thank you, Mickey.

I also want to thank -- I'm going call him Mayor Villaraigosa. He will always be Mayor Villaraigosa. He was the chairman or president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors when I first got elected. He welcomed me in the organization with open arms. Mayor, you are an icon. You are an iconic leader. Someone who we all have learned a great deal from. Really it is a great honor for me to be able to call you friend as someone who has done so much for so many mayors across this nation. Thank you, Mayor Villaraigosa.

I also have to recognize another mayor, who is here tonight, who is someone who really over the years has become a dear friend of mine. He served for eight years as the mayor of

the District of Columbia. He was the president of the National League of Cities at one time. Really he took over the District of Columbia at a time when it would be an understatement to say that we were in precarious financial straits. He was the chief financial officer and then was elected mayor for eight years. I want you to know, Mayor Williams, that you are someone for whom I have enormous respect. I appreciate what you've done for the people of the District of Columbia and appreciate the fact that you continue today to serve the city. Mayor Anthony Williams.

I want to thank you, Mayor Smith, for taking on the responsibility of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. At such point that you're not doing that anymore, you have a calling as a stand-up comedian. So you did a good job of, as you said, warming up the audience. It's great to be able to serve with you now during your tenure as the head of the organization and someone who has created something innovative called the Innovation Program. It has given a lot of us a chance to talk about things that we do in our own cities. So thank you very much for your leadership.

And to Mayor Stan, the mayor of Phoenix, some of you may have seen us taking a photograph earlier. There is a bridge, there's a nexus here that many may not know. The mayor of course is the mayor of Phoenix, Arizona.

And we have a new chief financial officer here in the District of Columbia. A gentleman by the name of Jeff DeWitt whose previous job was as CFO for the city of Phoenix, Arizona. Jeff, stand up and be recognized.

It is an extraordinary honor, frankly, for me to be able to serve in this capacity. I'm a native Washingtonian. I went to the public schools of the District of Columbia. I went on to George Washington University and I've been here in the city my entire life. If there ever was a homie, it is me. I'm delighted to be able to have this opportunity to be in this role.

I also am delighted to be able to do the things that I think are important to the city. And to be able to be honored tonight by Mickey and the Network is such an important thing for me, Mickey. It doesn't get any better to be honored for doing the right thing. That is exactly what we try to do in the city, is the right thing.

I work every day with one of the finest group of leaders that I've ever worked with in my life. I'm sure there are other mayors who feel like they've had extraordinary cabinets and leadership groups that they worked with, but I believe that mine is the absolute finest group. Some of them have joined here tonight and I want to take the opportunity to recognize them.

First of all, our Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services BB Otero. A gentleman who served as the director of our Department of Parks and Recreation who did such an extraordinary job that I couldn't wait to tap him for the next responsibility that come along.

You see, we not only are a city. We're a county and we're a state all rolled into one. So we have an Office of the State Superintendent for Education. And even though we're a city, we have a State Superintendent for Education. That gentleman happens to be Jesús Aguirre. Jesús.

And the person who does a great job, she worked with me when I was the chair of the Council of the District of Columbia and then moved over. When I had the opportunity to do this, she ran. She is the executive director of our Office of Latino Affairs, Roxanne Olivás.

The things that we've tried to do again are the right thing. I was glad to be able to sustain and Mayor Williams was involved in starting the HealthCare Alliance here in the District of Columbia. It really is one of the things that's allowed us to be able to have a very narrow gap between those who are insured and those who are uninsured even before the Affordable Care Act was adopted. We were in a position to say that we were second in the nation, second only to the State of Massachusetts, in covering adults. We were first in the nation

in covering children. The big reason for that is the HealthCare Alliance.

The HealthCare Alliance covers people who cannot be covered by Medicaid. And many of those folks are not going to be covered by other commercial insurance programs in the country. We have a lot of undocumented immigrants who are covered by the HealthCare Alliance. Isn't it wonderful to be able to say to people you don't have to worry about waiting until you get very sick to go to an emergency room? You have insurance that will cover you and you will do it in a dignified way to be able to go in and receive the healthcare that you deserve.

We also were asked at one point by the federal government. I'm sure we're all aware of Secure Communities. We were asked by the federal government to have our law enforcement officers go in and enforce immigration laws, if you will. We said we weren't going to do that unless there were some reasons. Unless there were some criminal acts that were involved, we were not going to routinely go and inquire about people's immigration status. If you want to do that, you are in the wrong city in Washington, D.C., to expect us to do that. It is not going to happen.

And yes, Mayor Villaraigosa, we recognize too there are a lot of people who could not get driver's licenses in the city. People who work, people who want to work, people who want to be

able to get to their job every day and deserve the opportunity to be able to drive safely and, frankly, to be able to create safe opportunities for other people to move about in the District of Columbia.

So I asked my staff. I said, you know what, we want to put together a bill. We're going to work with our Council of the District of Columbia to get this bill passed. We introduced it last spring. It took a lot longer than what I thought it was going to but, those who've been in this job, you know that things don't move as quickly as you would like.

Finally, this fall we got the council to enact this bill that provides the opportunity for people who are undocumented to be able to get a driver's license in the District of Columbia so that they could go to work and get around the city just like everybody else.

Our mantra is one city. We mean that quite seriously. And that is, anybody who lives in the District of Columbia among the 647,000 people who live in the District of Columbia, is going to be treated with dignity and respect and have the same opportunities as everybody else. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the way we live every day. I invite you all to work with us here in this city also so that the day will come, when we have a vote in Congress, we are treated with the same dignity and

respect. And maybe we'll be the 51st state of the United States of America. Thank you all very much.