Mayoral Influence in Federal Policy

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The mayors of America's cities and towns are a growing force in national politics. This research reveals the efforts of mayors to influence national policy through three aspects: influence in Congress, influence in the White House, and influence from the mayors' viewpoint (through local government organizations).

The research was constructed during an internship with the U.S. Conference of Mayors through the Hinckley Institute of Politics. Methods of research focused on personal interviews with influential policy makers – members and staff of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, mayors and their hired city representatives in Washington, D.C. – and the research of those studying federal-city relations.

Highlights of the research include an interview with the late President of the United States Conference of Mayors, Michael Guido, then-mayor of Dearborn, Michigan. Mayor Guido notes the key to effective mayoral influence is frequency and repetitive reinforcement of the mayor's position. Also included is an overview of mayoral relations with the White House during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Revealed are the efforts of President Reagan to end city-federal relations, termed “New Federalism.” His policy was almost successful at ending the relations between the national and local governments entirely. It is suggested that the policy of George W. Bush is modeled somewhat on Reagan’s New Federalism.

The research concludes that our communities and neighborhoods are the essential fabric of America and the success of our municipalities is inextricably linked to the success of the country. If the actions in our national government intend to ignore the requests of city leaders, our entire country will suffer the consequences.

This work is dedicated to the memory of the late President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Mayor of Dearborn, Michigan, Michael Guido, who died of cancer December 2006. Thank you for your leadership and hospitality, Mayor Guido.