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## **State and Local Leaders Call On Next Administration to Prioritize Federal-State-Local Partnership**

The elected leadership of seven state and local government public interest organizations—known as the “Big 7”—joined together in Philadelphia on Monday, September 29, to highlight the important roles state and local government leaders play in solving national issues and to call on the next president to actively engage these leaders when determining national policy.

The following statement was issued jointly by Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, National Governors Association (NGA); Representative Donna Stone, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL); Representative Bob Godfrey, Council of State Governments (CSG); Supervisor Don Stapley, National Association of Counties (NACo); Doug Palmer, United States Conference of Mayors (USCM); Kathleen Novak, National League of Cities (NLC); and David Limardi, International City/County Management Association (ICMA):

“The federal-state-local partnership is vital to ensuring the general welfare and well-being of our citizens and our country. As a new administration begins, it is important to recognize that the foundation of this partnership must be developed early and continuously nurtured and strengthened. To promote this relationship, the leaders of state and local government ask the next president to follow two main guiding principles.

“The first is to consult and cooperate with state and local leaders. We are on the frontlines everyday and know the effect of national policies and programs on the delivery of services to our citizens. We ask the next administration to adopt a policy of constructive engagement with state and local government to gather relevant information about existing issues, build on innovative programs already in place at the state and local level, and ensure national policies are implemented in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

“Second, we encourage the next administration to promote innovation at the state and local level. State and local leaders can respond more quickly and experiment more widely than our federal partners. We urge the new president to strive for federal policy that encourages this innovation by maximizing state and local flexibility as we implement national policies and programs.

“To ensure a productive relationship among federal, state and local levels of government, we are calling on the next administration to demonstrate its commitment to strengthening the partnership by taking the following actions within 60 days of taking office:

- Reaffirm an Executive Order on Federalism
- Establish an Office of Intergovernmental Relations within the White House to serve as a conduit between the President and state and local leaders immediately

after taking office

- Meet with members of the Big 7 state and local organizations to discuss how best to develop a strong partnership to address national policy.

“We are committed to maintaining a strong federal-state-local partnership and look forward to working with next administration to solve the challenges facing our country and better serve Americans.”

Representing ICMA as 2008-2009 President, Highland Park, Ill., City Manager Limardi underscored how every major issue facing the United States requires a national strategy and broad engagement with a wide range of organizations to succeed. During the Philadelphia event, he emphasized that

“What many people may not realize is the fact that local governments have most of the resources we need in a disaster. The problem has been that we do not have an intergovernmental system in place that helps us get those resources quickly to the places that need help, as Hurricane Katrina so painfully reminded us.

“State and local governments have been building stronger networks to help communities recover in the aftermath of a major flood, hurricane, or other catastrophic event. State governments created the Emergency Management Assistance Compact to make it easier to share resources across state lines. Likewise, local governments have expanded their traditional mutual aid assistance to provide emergency assistance to cities and counties in other parts of their state, or in other states. Local leaders in Florida, for example, approached their state government to build a statewide mutual aid system that can identify and organize resources for rapid deployment. The state of Florida is now a fully engaged partner in developing this networked system, a good model for others.

“Local governments also have developed regional strategies that work across state lines and involve multiple public and private sector partners. For example, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has created a structure that allows 19 local governments, the District of Columbia, the states of Maryland and Virginia, the federal government, other public, nonprofit, and volunteer organizations, local schools and universities to work together before, during, or after a regional emergency.”

The Big-7 organizations met in Philadelphia because it is the city where representatives of the states came together to form a federal government and establish a governing partnership that has lasted more than two centuries. The group sent letters to Senator McCain and Senator Obama during the week of September 22 outlining their views and asking for a meeting with the president-elect and his transition team prior to the inauguration or soon thereafter. Such a meeting would provide the incoming president with an opportunity to hear directly from state and local leaders, ask questions, and discuss common solutions.

The success of the next president’s domestic agenda will largely depend on the ability to build support across the intergovernmental system. State and local jurisdictions need staffing to support a consistent dialogue and to develop recommendations and supporting strategies that require intergovernmental and cross-sector execution.