

AMERICA WOMEN MAYORS CONFERENCE

On September 20th, 2018, the America Woman Mayors Conference was held at the Whitehouse Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In attendance were approximately 90 Woman Mayors, Vice President Mike Pence, Education Secretary Betsy Devos, Senior Counselor Kellyanne Conway, Senior Advisor Mercedes Schlapp, and Director of Legislative Affairs Shahira Knight. Prior to attending I reached out to a few local businesses to learn what questions or concerns they had. There were two common issues; first being the lack of employees and second, the need for a change in education including college duration/courses noting more emphasis on vocational and technical.

The Conference focused around the **economy and workforce**. Tying into this was education and the opioid epidemic, both seen as imperative for the overall economy and workforce. The Federal Administration is asking many questions with regard as to why typical college degrees require a 4-year program; why are the schools by the day and hours as determined; why do we assign kids to school by address and age; why limit educators; and why does education stop at graduation? Aiding students to enter the work force sooner by considering the discontinuation of required courses that play little to no role in the student's future employment and ability to take some high school classes online. These measures reduce student cost, student loans, as well as college duration. Also, allow more flexibility at the local level in providing education. Narcan, which is an opioid antagonist used for the complete or partial reversal of an overdose, was referenced as being a good thing; but what happens after it being administered? There should be complete treatment for the whole person to include skills training and



education. For each of these discussion points the Federal Administration also asks: ‘Is this the best we can do or is there a better way?’ Task Forces for each are actively researching to develop a plan. It was also emphasized that if there are no changes implemented in the near future, these programs will potentially be eliminated within 20 years, as most all Federal revenue generated will need to be applied against the rising National Debt.

Other topics discussed include the following:

- **Tax Reform** - The 2017 tax reform package that created tax incentives to encourage long-term investments in low-income urban and rural communities nationwide was discussed. **Opportunity Zones** have been designated and IRS guidance is expected soon on what constitutes a qualified investment. Over the years other countries copied the U.S. in lowering taxes while the U.S. increased over 30 years. This created companies to move to other countries.

- **Infrastructure** - The Administration is focused on **accountability, efficiency, and transparency** with infrastructure a priority focus for next year.

- **Career Opportunities for Military Spouses** - Creating opportunities for military spouses to keep and further their careers as they move around the country. Example: U.S. Chamber of Commerce campaign to support career development and create meaningful employment opportunities for military spouses. *Encouraged at the local level.*

- **Economic Recovery Following a Natural Disaster** - The Small Business Administration makes direct low-interest loans to businesses, private non-profit organizations, homeowners, and renters to repair or replace real estate, personal property, machinery and equipment, inventory and business assets that have been damaged or destroyed in a declared disaster.

- **Education Enhancements** - To make education work better, the Administration is focused on support for technical, apprenticeships, and higher education opportunities for non-traditional students. This is in understanding that there are multiple pathways to a successful career. Recent legislation was passed by Congress to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act that invests in career and technical education training to support our Nation's workforce. In support of affordability and modernizing the Federal Student Aid framework applicants will

now be able to complete an application on a mobile device as of October 1st. The Department of Education is expanding flexibilities around Pell Grants and expanding the use of 529 accounts for K-12 education.

- **Opioid Epidemic** - As referenced by The Belden Industries Program, the United States uses pain meds more than another other country in the world. Statistics also show addiction problems can begin within eight (8) days after being prescribed an opioid. In response, work is being done to limit the treatment period. Additionally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) awarded more than \$930 million in State Opioid Response (STOR) grants to support a comprehensive response to the opioid epidemic and expand access to treatment and recovery support services. The STOR program aims to address the opioid crisis by increasing access to medication-assisted treatment for the treatment of opioid use disorder, reducing unmet treatment need, and reducing opioid overdose related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment and recovery activities for opioid use disorder. If applicants or existing employees fail the drug test, the program pays for treatment and the job is held for them. To date, the program has helped 30 individuals and partners with the local college.

The National League of Cities continues to work with the administration and Congress to ensure that these funds make their way down to the local area.