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Senators Affirm Local Franchise Authority

by Christina Fletcher Loftus

Senators Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) and Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) last week released a statement affirming the central role of localities in cable and video franchising.

Currently, state and local authorities have responsibility for administering franchising within certain federal limits. However, several federal bills introduced in 2005 would nationalize the franchising process, removing local authority to manage streets and sidewalks, provide for public safety, enhance competition and collect compensation for private use of public land.

The statements of Burns and Inouye, both members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, recognize and reaffirm the role of states and localities in the video franchising process.

"As you recognize, each community is unique, and local elected leaders are in the best position to ensure that each community's needs are met," said NLC President James Hunt, councilmember from Clarksburg, W.Va., in a letter to Burns and Inouye. "We are gratified that you recognize the limited federal role in managing streets and sidewalks around the country."

The senators' statements also recognize the need for promoting competition in video services and competitive neutrality and a level playing field.

"Local government strongly endorses promoting competition for all consumers and treating like services alike," Hunt stated in the letter. "The elected leaders of our nation's cities and towns stand with you, ready and willing to welcome video

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President's Budget Slashes CDBG Program

by Mike Wallace

The President, in his fiscal year 2007 budget proposal, has chosen to focus federal resources on his goal of increasing homeownership, while making deep cuts to community development programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

The President's budget cuts \$1 billion from the CDBG program, from \$4.178 billion last year to \$3.032 billion proposed for FY07, making for the lowest level of funding for this program since 1990. Direct CDBG formula grants to cities are slashed from \$3.71 billion in FY06 to \$2.77 billion in FY07, a 25 percent reduction.

This reduction in funding comes under a retooled version of the "Strengthening America's Communities Initiative" (SACI), which last year called for the complete elimination of the CDBG program and the transfer of all community development funding to the Department of Commerce.

NLC successfully fought off that challenge to the program in a massive grassroots and lobbying effort. This year, the SACI proposal keeps the CDBG program

"While we are heartened to see that the President has proposed a substantial increase for Section 8 housing for our neediest Americans, we are disappointed that once again the Community Development Block Grant Program has been significantly reduced."

— NLC President James Hunt, councilmember, Clarksburg, W.Va.

at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Unfortunately, the new SACI proposal consolidates three programs into CDBG: the Section 108 Loan Guarantee program, the Brownfields Revitalization Program and the Economic Development Initiative grant program. The practical effect of consolidation would be the elimination of these three important programs.

Cities use CDBG to tackle their most serious community development challenges, providing funding for public works and infrastructure, decent affordable housing, public services and economic development. Many of these activities are carried out at the local level by private companies,

such as construction contractors, plumbers and electricians, as well as by nonprofit community-based providers.

Because of its flexibility and use in a variety of projects, local and state governments and development officials rely on the program as the cornerstone of any new community revitalization effort. Every dollar of the CDBG program invested in communities is leveraged by three dollars in private funding, bringing much-needed investment, jobs and the chance for a fresh start to blighted communities.

NLC is working in coalition with other organizations representing local elected officials, cities and counties and housing and see page 8, column 1

United Together



Local elected officials from around the world gathered in Washington, D.C., last week for a meeting of the United Cities and Local Governments Executive Bureau. Washington Mayor Anthony A. Williams, NLC immediate past president, and NLC hosted the meeting. For a story on the meeting, see page 3.

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Winning Public Trust Through Performance Leadership

by Kevin Baum

The following is a preview of one of the topics to be covered during Leadership Training Institute seminars at the Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. "Building Public Trust through Performance Leadership" will be held Saturday, March 11.

Do you ever wonder why it is so fashionable to criticize government? Why government has, in many ways, become a symbol of bureaucratic thinking, waste and inefficiency?

Open any book in the library, turn on the nightly news, or flip through the local newspaper and you are bound to find a comment or story about the "Fleecing of America," government spending run amok, or alleged scandal.

What's particularly disturbing about much of this commentary is the apparent absence of meaningful discourse.

As government leaders, when we are criticized, our general tendency is to defend what we are doing, rather than to



Kevin Baum

demonstrate what we are accomplishing in the lives of our citizens.

Performance management is not a new concept to government leaders. We've all read "Reinventing Government" and are aware of the President's Management Agenda.

For the most part, we understand and appreciate the need for performance metrics, and we encourage the collection of data. But have we truly changed the way we manage in government?

Have we become perform-

LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE



ance-informed organizations, equipped with powerful stories of service improvement, policy enhancement and citizen support?

Or have we simply become performance reporting organizations — repositories of mountains of impressive data that tell us nothing about the difference we are making in the lives of our citizens and stakeholders?

This is an important question and not one to be taken lightly.

On one hand, we are actively engaged in the performance process, looking at and exploring the meaning of our data and performance information.

On the other hand, we are simply spectators to an ever-growing mountain of information, churning out questionable statistics that tell stories about

what we are doing, rather than how we are doing.

Does our public discourse reflect our management habits?

Performance leadership is different than performance management.

Government performance leadership is a journey — a continuous and iterative process that allows room for mistakes and ongoing reassessment.

Performance leadership is not just about budgets and reporting. Performance leadership is not about impressive charts and data.

Performance leadership has at its heart a commitment to service improvement by becoming a learning organization.

Learning from our experience so that we can make a positive impact in the lives of our

citizens and stakeholders is the ultimate and essential product of successful performance leadership.

Success doesn't occur overnight, but rather is the product of an ongoing commitment to inquiry and discovery.

Anyone can collect data. It's what we do with our performance data that defines us as visionaries — true government leaders in a world of status quo.

Today, as government leaders, if we cannot demonstrate compellingly and empirically that we know what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what the actual and expected results will be, we will certainly lose the fight for limited support and dwindling public trust, and we will continue to be the object of unwanted public criticism.

To win the day, we need to change the conversation; we need to stop talking about ourselves and start demonstrating our impact. Government does make a difference. The question is: Can we prove it?

Kevin Baum is founder and principal of InCentergy, based in Austin, Texas.



Are YOU exercising effective public leadership?

Harvard

You should consider applying for the *Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government* at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

In just three weeks, participants learn creative approaches to managing the real-world challenges of government. In 2006 the program is offered from June 11-30 and July 9-28.

For more information or to apply online, please visit our website at www.ksg.harvard.edu/execed/sl or call 617-496-0484 for an application packet.

Senior Executives in State and Local Government
June 11 - 30, 2006 or July 9 - 28, 2006

Our participants are committed to making the world a better place. We're committed to providing them with the skills to succeed.

Nominations for Examples of Successful Youth Safety Programs Still Being Accepted

by Melissa Rogers

Cities still have the opportunity to nominate exemplary partnership programs in which mayors and law enforcement officials work together for the safety of children and youth.

The search for program examples, launched by NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families with support from the U.S. Department of Justice Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, will highlight active programs that include, but are not limited to, areas such as:

- Youth violence prevention/reduction;
- Juvenile re-entry;
- Mentoring; or
- Bullying.

Program profiles will detail mayors' and police chiefs' motivations and methods for collaboration, as well as signs of success and evidence of impact.

Profiles of selected programs will be published in the COPS Office's "Innovations" series and in *Nation's Cities Weekly*, and will also be featured at conferences held by NLC and the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Details: To nominate a program, visit www.nlc.gov/iyef to access a brief online questionnaire. For more information, contact Melissa Rogers at (202) 626-3006 or rogers@nlc.org.