

## **Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, Elizabeth, New Jersey**

Now in his eleventh year as Mayor of Elizabeth, a diverse city of more than 120,000 and the fourth largest city in New Jersey, J. Christian Bollwage has created a more efficient city government while sparking \$500 million in economic redevelopment which will see the city into the 21st century.

Mayor Bollwage, a native of the city, was elected to his first term in 1992, reelected in November 1996 and November 2000.

In 2003, Mayor Bollwage announced his vision of the future of Elizabeth, which included the continued expansion of economic development, recreation, housing and transportation in the City. He pledged his commitment to improving and advancing Hometown security for Elizabeth and the region. He announced a Homeland Security Conference at Kean University that would bring together National, State and local leaders to discuss various topics, concerns, and develop an action plan using Elizabeth as a model of establishing interagency communication.

In past years Mayor Bollwage declared the "Year of the Senior." Advancements for Elizabeth's senior citizens that year included the creation of 119 new units of affordable senior citizen housing throughout the City. Other services such as the "Elizabeth Fix-it" program through which eligible seniors can receive free minor repair work on their homes are geared towards assisting the City's senior citizens and proved to be a success. Mayor Bollwage continues to honor the senior citizens of Elizabeth during the new millennium as he offers assistance through his Office on Aging for various senior programs and concessions and announced plans to build two new senior centers.

Other past initiatives include, "New Hope for Our Children" which included the creation of an Office on Youth, a Youth Advisory Board and after-school and summer LEAP and SOAR programs. His focus on children also resulted in the opening of a new branch of the Elizabeth Public Library and a new children's library located in the Main Branch and the implementation of Project Love, an award-winning curfew program, which combines enforcement with counseling. The Mayor continues to offer our children safe and fun recreational alternatives with the creation of two new parks, and additional soccer fields, football fields and basketball courts throughout areas of Elizabeth where they are most needed

The Mayor has also made a commitment in the area of public safety, bringing the police department to its highest numbers ever. His police initiatives also included the installation of the state-of-the-art Elizabeth Police Information and Communication System. EPIC, which improved police response time and gives responding officers more information at the scene. In 1999, the Mayor coupled the highly successful EPIC with the revolutionary Vehicle Tracking System, which further enhanced response time by placing a microchip in each car to give dispatchers a fairly exact location of all city police vehicles. As we enter the 21st century, Mayor Bollwage provides Elizabeth with the most technologically advanced police force in the state of New Jersey.

Mayor Bollwage has also instituted walking patrols in all of the City's business districts, which

has assisted in the renaissance of these areas. He initiated and just this year doubled the SAFENET patrol, which is designed to deal with quality of life complaints such as loitering and neighborhood disputes. The Mayor has also put plain-clothes officers in city schools, and dedicated teams of officers to patrol the senior citizens' complexes and federal housing projects. In 2002, police presence was increased, street violence was aggressively combated and at-risk-neighborhoods where targeted.

In addition, through his work with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the Mayor recently brought home state grant money that will be combined with Elizabeth Urban Enterprise Zone revenues to make safety improvements to 50 City intersections. Also part of his "Walk Smart, Drive Smart Elizabeth" campaign is a public safety education program aimed at seniors and children. Mayor Bollwage received high praise for this program from Col. Peter O'Hagan, director of the NJ State Office of Highway Safety, during a pedestrian-safety workshop at the annual League of Municipalities convention.

The City's ongoing economic redevelopment plans have already brought The Elizabeth Center at 13A, which is home to IKEA, the chain's most successful North American store, and the Toys R Us/Kids World Superstore. Rex Plex, a state-of-the-art sport and recreation facility, like no other in the country, is growing and doing every well. Across the street from this development is the Jersey Gardens Mall, located on Kapkowski Road. The megamall, which opened in October of 1999, was constructed on the site of a former municipal landfill and brought 5,000 new jobs and more than \$6.5 million in new ratables to the city. This year Jersey Gardens Mall is celebrating its three-year anniversary and once again it is reporting increases in sales and shoppers. The recently opened 21-screen Loews movie theater also reported record-breaking numbers in attendance. Last year Marriott Courtyard and Residence Inn and an Extended Stay America were completed while Country Inns and Suites will open Spring 2003. The Wyndham Hotel including a Shula's Steakhouse 2 also opened for business. Together creating nearly 800 rooms, they have fostered job creation and provided opportunities for success. Second only to Atlantic City in the number of rooms -Elizabeth has become a destination. The Mayor's role in redeveloping this brownfield site earned him the American Plan Association's Distinguished Leadership Award for Elected Officials.

The Jersey Gardens Mall project is just one example of the Mayor's ongoing efforts to redevelop brownfields in the city. His efforts have resulted in Elizabeth being chosen for a Federal Brownfields Pilot Program and the hiring of a brownfields project coordinator. Mayor Bollwage was appointed to co-chair the U.S. Conference of Mayors Brownfields Taskforce and has worked with other cities to encourage the development of these types of properties across the nation. His Brownfield's initiatives earned him the "Brownfield News Award for Excellence in Brownfields Redevelopment" from Brownfield Magazine. Mayor Bollwage was the first New Jersey recipient of the award, which recognized his leadership in initiating the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

All of these economic developments are encompassed by Elizabeth's Urban Enterprise Zone. Under Mayor Bollwage's administration, Elizabeth's UEZ was named number one in the nation. It has generated \$30 million in revenue during the last five years, and created 6,000 new jobs, helping to cut unemployment rates in half.

The UEZ program is an important economic tool to Elizabeth and the 28 other UEZ municipalities throughout New Jersey. Spurred by this success, Mayor Bollwage created the UEZ Mayors Commission in May of 1998. As Chairman of this pro-active Commission, the Mayor brings the UEZ Mayors and administrators from around the state together as a unified voice to Trenton regarding zone issues.

The Mayor's hard work in lobbying Washington D.C. legislators has also paid off as the City received a \$29 million Hope VI grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The HOPE VI grant is being used to revitalize the Elizabethport neighborhood by removing housing projects, erecting new townhouses in their place, and empowering the residents of public housing through job training and counseling that promotes self-sufficiency and economic independence. This year the fourth phase of the Hope VI development was completed and over a hundred residents have moved into their new homes.

Mayor Bollwage has been active in the United States Conference of Mayors and currently serves on its National Advisory Committee. He has previously served on the Legislative Committee and currently serves as co-chairman of the Brownfields Task Force and chairman of the Highway Safety Subcommittee where he was a leader on the debate to renew ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act). This year Mayor Bollwage has been appointed to serve as President on the Executive Board of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities and as Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors' Criminal and Social Justice Committee. He will also serve on the Video Lottery Study Commission.

As an advocate for cities, the Mayor has also led the fight to lower garbage disposal fees in New Jersey, resulting in more than \$2 million in tax savings to the residents of Elizabeth.

In other areas, Mayor Bollwage has worked to open up City government to the residents, holding open office hours and seeking input from residents in planning for the city's future. He created the Infoline, which gives residents one phone number to call to get answers for their questions and to offer suggestions.

Currently, the Mayor is an adjunct professor in the Public Administration Department at Kean University in Union, New Jersey, where he teaches undergraduate courses in Public Administration. Also a graduate of Kean University, Mayor Bollwage holds a graduate degree with honors in Public Administration, has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award, and was later inducted into the Pi Alpha Alpha honor society.

Before becoming Mayor, Chris Bollwage was a Councilman for 10 years, serving as Council President in 1989. He was also a member of the Elizabeth Planning Board for four years.

Prior to holding elected office, the Mayor served as sales, marketing and public relations representative for A&J Trading Corporation of Linden and traffic Coordinator for Kerr Steamship Incorporated, New York City.

Mayor Bollwage and his wife, Nancy, have a daughter, Jacqueline.

Testimony of

J. Christian Bollwage  
Mayor of Elizabeth, New Jersey

Before the

Democratic Task Force on Homeland Security  
United States House of Representatives

On

"Homeland Security"

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Good morning. I am Chris Bollwage, Mayor of Elizabeth, New Jersey. I also serve as Chair of the Criminal and Social Justice Committee of The United States Conference of Mayors, a non-partisan organization that represents over 1,100 cities in America.

I want to thank the Task Force for calling today's hearing. I also want to recognize the leadership of my Congressman, Robert Menendez, for all he is doing for New Jersey and the nation as Chair of the Democratic Caucus in the House.

In the wake of September 11 and the anthrax mailings, emergency management planning has been redoubled in cities across the country, and there have been significant new deployments of public safety resources.

The Conference of Mayors released a survey that estimated that from September 11, 2001 through the end of 2002, cities spent an additional \$2.6 billion on new homeland security priorities including equipment, overtime and training.

A more recent survey we released estimated that cities nationwide spent \$70 million a week extra as a result of the Iraq war and increased threat alert. The costs reflected in this survey come on top of billions spent by cities on homeland security since 9/11, does not include indirect costs, and does not include major equipment purchases or other important security needs.

Mayors know the importance of public safety and are 100 percent committed to the homeland war against terrorism. But we must forge a new federal-local partnership to make sure that our domestic soldiers - police, fire, emergency workers

and other city employees - have the resources needed for this new challenge.

We have been working very closely with the Administration, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and his Department, and other federal agencies to improve intergovernmental cooperation on homeland security.

In October of 2001 the Conference of Mayors sponsored a Safety and Security Summit at which we developed a National Action Plan covering transportation security, emergency management, and law enforcement. There has been major progress on many of the action items contained in that agenda.

For example, the nation's mayors were among the first groups to call for federalization of airport screening security, which has become law.

We also called for the creation of a new federal department, which has become law.

And, we called for the passage of information sharing legislation, which has become law.

I want to thank the Congress for working with us on these priorities.

We also called for increased federal support for first responders. We are pleased that new money has begun to flow from Washington, but have serious concerns with the funding mechanisms, which I would like to briefly discuss.

### **Supporting our First Responders**

Cities are America's frontlines in ensuring homeland security. When you call 9-1-1, the phone doesn't ring at the White House or the State House. Those emergency calls come into your city's police, fire and emergency medical personnel.

At a January 24, 2002 White House meeting with 300 mayors, President Bush announced his \$3.5 billion first responders initiative, which we praised as an important step forward. As we stated then, we want to work directly with Congress to refine that proposal and make sure that those dollars are provided in the most efficient and effective manner.

To that end, it is our belief that funding must be provided directly to city and county first responders, rather than all flowing through the states as proposed by the Administration.

I know that this Task Force may be hearing from governors, so I want to stress this point. I am very concerned that despite the best intentions of the Administration in developing its plan, the needs of the local first response community will not be met unless funding is provided directly to cities and counties.

We must also ensure that the funding can be used to not only prepare for a possible attack, but to also help prevent future attacks. Our police departments must have access to the funding, and officer deployments such as overtime should be specifically authorized.

For example, mayors called for and support the more detailed terrorism alert system now being managed by Secretary Ridge, but these alerts require more officers on the streets -- in essence national security being provided by local law

enforcement.

Mayors appreciate that the FY 2003 supplemental included \$2.2 billion in new first responder funding, but again the majority of this funding is being channeled through the states. The Conference of Mayors is going to launch a monitoring campaign to track - as best we can - how much of this funding is reaching cities and major population centers. However, I want to strongly encourage the Congress to institute its own tracking effort and to require DHS to provide timely and accurate information as to how much of this funding is reaching cities, and how quickly.

### **The Ongoing Fight Against Crime**

While we wage the new war against terrorism, we must not retreat from the ongoing fight against crime.

In the 1990's, mayors worked closely with our police chiefs and officers to increase public safety -- with dramatic results.

Mayors strongly believe that major factors in this crime reduction were additional officers on the streets, the deployment of new technology, and a new focus on community policing -- all of which were greatly assisted by the COPS program and Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG).

But while there have been major reductions, crime is still a major issue in many cities, and in many neighborhoods within cities.

In addition, we know that key indicators, such as the economy



and return of more than 625,000 ex-convicts annually to our cities, have led some experts to predict an upswing in crime rates in coming years - with some cities already seeing these increases.

Many cities want to hire additional officers, move existing officers onto the streets, and place new officers in schools. In addition, there is a major interest in new crime fighting technologies.

That is why we find it counterintuitive that OMB is proposing to cut COPS by 77 percent and eliminate the block grant by merging it into the state Byrne Grant program.

We must ensure that cities have the resources needed to fight both the domestic war on terrorism and the continuing war against crime. We simply cannot fund homeland defense by de-funding local law enforcement.

And I must stress that we strongly believe that one of the best ways to prevent terrorism is to have more officers on the streets armed with better technology.

## **Port Security**

Let me briefly touch on an issue of particular importance to the City of Elizabeth, Port Security. The Port of Elizabeth is the largest containerized, deep-water shipping terminal in North America. It generates more than 5,700 jobs and \$150 million in revenues. The terminal handles more than 12 million tons of container cargo and more than 9,000 containers a year. The 2,463-acre port has more than 5.5 million square feet of storage and distribution space, and accounts for 75 percent of the region's ocean-borne traffic with more than \$2 billion in

foreign merchandise being received annually.

Mayors are greatly concerned that U.S. Customs is in the position to inspect just 2 percent of the 6 million cargo containers annually, making seaports and the final destinations of the containers all across America vulnerable to terrorists.

I want to stress the needed funding to improve port security infrastructure, including container inspection systems, vehicle and cargo inspection systems using gamma ray imaging, video camera surveillance systems for port-wide infrastructure and cruise terminal operations, explosive detection equipment for use at the passenger cruise ship terminals, and new watercraft to assist port law enforcement, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Customs Service, and INS at each of the nation's 361 ports.

We also urge the expansion of the sea marshal program and strongly urge greater cargo inspection at foreign ports of origin or call.

I am pleased that the Port of Elizabeth has been selected to receive funding under the high threat program Congress funded in the FY 2003 supplemental as Secretary Ridge announced in an event in Elizabeth several weeks ago, and I hope this funding will be substantial.

## **Conclusion**

There are many other issues that mayors are concerned about including transit and highway security, bio-terrorism, border security, and water security which I cannot cover this morning.

I want to thank the Task Force for this opportunity to testify,

and I look forward to continued discussions as together we work to strengthen our nation's homeland defense.