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NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

CITY STRATEGY CONFERENCE

As the National League of Cities moves into its 51st year, it is confronts unrest and change in the nation at large and among its own constituency. The issues of the day -- energy shortages, unemployment, inflation, and insufficient governmental revenues -- highlighting and accelerating differences in attitudes and needs within the ranks of the nation's cities. Public debate over present and potential financial crises in the older central cities is paralleled by lack of agreement among city officials themselves about what ought to be done with each taking a position according to the age, region, size, or personality of his city. At the same time, smaller cities, those under 50,000 population, are becoming restless to a degree bordering on militancy about their status in Federal policy, programs and the Federal system itself.

And in Washington, the federal government is making difficult decisions about policy and the allocation of national resources which directly affect the well being and future of cities of all sizes. Reenactment of revenue sharing is one example.

The result is that NLC is working in a national political climate that requires broad participation, consensus,and institutional cohesion from its city and state league members at a time when those things seem to be the hardest to come by.

How, then, shall NLC proceed? What directions shall it take? Which strategies should it employ to face the demands of national events and its membership simultaneously?

These are among the questions which the organization has to answer if it is to survive as the action arm of the nation's cities. To answer these questions properly, the organization should undertake a careful reexamination of its goals, the structure through which it works toward them and the methods and programs it employs.

Proposed Goals Program

This document proposes that the National League of Cities undertake a goals program to examine current organizational issues with the objective of developing recommendations for improving the leadership capability and representative functions of the organization. The goals program would consist of:

1. A review of the basic purposes for the existence of a national organization of cities and state leagues and, if necessary, re-defining NLC's mission.

2. An examination of NLC/member relations in order to identify ways in which services to state leagues and member cities can be strengthened in the light of current and anticipated public issues that may require action at the national level.

3. An analysis of current NLC funding to determine if financial resources are equable and adequate for current and future requirements.

4. A thorough review of the bylaws, including examination of the feasibility of extending Board terms, opening membership eligibility to additional cities, and installing a proportionate rating system for members.

The program would be undertaken in the form of a process that would allow for Board membership participation. This process would consist of a series of five (5) regional meetings which would be open to all member cities and state leagues. Organizational issues and plans would be discussed at these meetings, and member cities would be invited to testify at the regional meetings. The results of the regional hearings would be distilled and presented to the Board of Directors, who would make final recommendations to the membership.

The mechanism for undertaking the program is recommended to be a National League of Cities"Goals Program Task Force" which will be appointed by the NLC President. The President would also appoint a series of five regional committees. The chairmen of the regional committees would be selected from within the membership of the national "Goals Task Force."

Regional committees would be comprised of all state league directors from each of the five regions plus two elected officials from each state in the region. Recommendations for committee appointments will be made jointly by state league directors and the chairmen of each regional committee. The NLC President would make final appointments to the regional committees.

Schedule of Goals Activities

1. December, 1975-January, 1976 - appointment of National League of Cities Goals Program Task Force (NLC President.)

2. January through February, 1976 - Develop detailed plans for goals program (NLC staff.)

3. March 1976 - Convene Goals Task Force at the 1976 Congressional Cities Conference; Task Force will review goals program plans and make appropriate modifications and appoint regional committee by end of the month (NLC President, Task Force and staff.)

4. April through June, 1976 - Conduct regional goals meetings.

5. July, 1976 - Present tentative recommendations to NLC Board (Task Force.)

6. July through October - Define goals, take appropriate steps to recommend changes in bylaws and other pre-implementation action as necessary.

7. December, 1976- Present final recommendations to membership for consideration.