



USU Legislative Agenda for the 111th Congress, 2nd Session

Our nation's cities play an important role in America's national prosperity, driving innovation and economic growth by employing many highly-skilled workers and containing clusters of related firms and industries. However, urban areas face many challenges unique to cities. Their secondary schools experience a higher drop-out rate than the national average and their elementary and secondary students typically score below state and national averages on performance exams. Urban schools often encounter teacher shortages in high need subject areas such as mathematics and science. Particular neighborhoods are stricken with poverty and struggle to attract businesses and services. Health disparities are pervasive in urban settings, and result in part, from an insufficient and ethnically imbalanced health workforce in cities.

As anchors for our nation's cities, public urban research universities are uniquely positioned with a broad range of skills and resources – intellectual, human, technological, and social – to engage in these urban challenges. They are an essential part of the education pipeline, enrolling large numbers of students from local school districts and specifically training them to be educators in urban areas. Public urban research universities are economic drivers, as they serve as prominent employers, real estate developers, and business incubators in their cities. These institutions are utilizing their capacity to produce an urban health workforce, conduct interdisciplinary research, provide clinical resources, and organize community-academic partnerships on chronic diseases and health disparities. Public urban research universities often act as conveners of the various stakeholder groups from their local communities as well as the greater metropolitan areas. Community engagement by public urban research universities not only provides a valuable service to the cities, but also enables these institutions to improve their own core knowledge and expertise that leads to further theories, discoveries, and advances for our nation.

The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities' (USU) legislative agenda for the 111th Congress, 2nd Session seeks to escalate urban university engagement around strengthening communities, the education pipeline, and urban health. USU's legislative agenda calls for expanding opportunities for public urban research universities, including initiatives to establish an Urban Grant University program (modeled after the Land, Sea, Space, and Sun Grant programs) at the Department of Housing and Urban Development and support the work of P-20 councils through the Department of Education. The agenda also recommends improving and strengthening existing programs, like the University Centers program at the Economic Development Administration. At the same time, USU proposes sustaining and increasing funding for proven programs that are essential to public urban research universities and their local communities, such as Title VII and Title VIII programs of the Public Health Service Act. Many of these ideas have been

packaged into a comprehensive bill, called the Urban University Renaissance Act of the 21st Century.

Strengthening Communities

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Create a competitive grant program to encourage institutions of higher education to create and sustain a campus-wide infrastructure and culture around working with and strengthening their local neighborhoods and communities.
- Establish early career research rewards, modeled after the National Science Foundation's program, at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Designate urban universities as leaders in community engagement that are eligible for special federal funds, similar to the successful Land, Space, Sea, and Sun Grant programs.
- Create a housing and urban development grant assistance program that encourages universities to provide technical and financial assistance to non-profit organizations to undertake community development and affordable housing projects.
- Provide \$25 million for a University Community Fund at HUD that supports innovative university-community development strategies that respond to local needs and build on past experience. The program should be separate from the existing MSI programs and not funded at the expense of the existing MSI programs.
- Fund the Choice Neighborhood Initiative at a minimum of \$250 million and ensure activities support neighborhood transformation efforts beyond public housing and allow for participation of universities as partners.

National Innovation Foundation

- Establish a government-related public corporation or independent federal agency to support industry and universities in their innovative activities.
- Offer competitive grants for regional industry clusters to collaboratively generate innovation and higher-wage employment.

Corporation for National and Community Service

- Restore the annual appropriation for Learn and Serve America to at least its FY 2004 level of \$42.7 million and fund the Campuses of Service program at its authorized level of \$7 million.

Environmental Protection Agency

- Invest in a grant program modeled after the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnerships Centers program for universities to develop research and direct service for distressed areas around environmental issues impacting local communities, such as air quality, clean water, toxins, pesticides, human health, ecosystems, and land protection and restoration.

Economic Development Administration

- Reauthorize the Economic Development Administration and its University Centers program.
- Increase funding for the University Centers program to \$20 million for FY 2011, enabling additional centers to be established in the top 100 metro areas in the United States.

The Education Pipeline

Department of Education

- Establish a competitive grant program to support the work of local P-20 councils and improve the overall effectiveness of community strategies and reform efforts.
- Establish programs specifically for urban teachers.
 - Create a pilot program for urban school districts and urban universities to design and implement programs to improve teacher effectiveness specifically in urban schools and communities.
 - Create a national clearinghouse for urban teachers to assist with collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on improving teacher effectiveness in urban schools and communities.
- Expand eligibility and funding opportunities targeted at urban teachers in Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- Fund the America COMPETES Act's "Alignment of Education Programs" for states to align their secondary school graduation requirements with postsecondary education and workforce expectations as well as improve their P-20 education data systems.
- Fund Promise Neighborhood planning and implementation grants to support comprehensive neighborhood pipeline programs and ensure participation of universities as partners.
- Ensure the USU/Strive/Living Cities partnership is competitively positioned to apply for an Investing in Innovation grant.

- Re-establish an urban program under the Higher Education Act.
- Support funding for college access and persistence programs and activities that increase degree attainment at urban universities, including such partnerships with two-year institutions.

Urban Health

Department of Health and Human Services

- Strengthen federal reporting on workforce diversity.
 - Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to report on health workforce diversity and evaluate such initiatives funded by the Department.
 - Establish a clearinghouse on workforce diversity that will highlight model practices and programs. Data collection should in particular identify specific factors and characteristics related to urban and rural health workforce diversity initiatives.

Health Resources and Services Administration

- Provide adequate funding for Title VII and VIII programs, and in particular restore Title VII to at least its FY 2005 funding level.

National Institutes of Health

- Provide adequate overall funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a means to support NIH-wide and institute/center specific minority research training programs.