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Statement of Mike Mansfield - Big Hole National Monument

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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The President's Magna Carta for Urban America

SPEECH OF HON. MIKE MANSFIELD OF MONTANA IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES Wednesday, August 16, 1967

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, on Monday last there was a meeting of the Democratic leadership with the President at the White House. During the course of that meeting the domestic legislation was discussed in some detail, and after the meeting the President discussed with me in greater detail his hopes, his dreams, and his recommendations as they affect the future of the cities and the urban areas in the light of events which had transpired and in light of recommendations he had made to the Congress during the period in which he has served as President.

I suggested to him that if he thought it advisable, he might send to me a letter expressing his thoughts on this matter; and I told him that I, in turn, would express my thoughts and do so in a speech on the floor of the Senate at an opportune time.

I have received such a letter from the President which contains his thoughts. I shall refer to it at the conclusion of my remarks. I...
In his message on cities in 1965, which led to the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the President noted:

In the remainder of this century—in less than 40 years—urban population will double, city land will double and we will have to build in our cities as much as all that we have built since the first colonist arrived on these shores. It is as if we had 40 years to rebuild the entire urban United States.

In his message on cities in 1966, President Johnson said:

If we become two people—the suburban affluent and the urban poor, each filled with mistrust and fear one for the other... we shall as well condemn our own generation to a bitter paradox: and educated, wealthy, progressive people, who would not give their thoughts, their resources, or their will to provide for their common well-being.

Last August in Syracuse, N.Y., the President warned:

This is no time to delay... I do not know how long it will take to rebuild our cities. I do know it must not—and will not—take forever. For my part, I pledge that this Administration will not cease our efforts to make right what has taken generations to make wrong.

And earlier this year, in his message on urban and rural poverty, he said:

We do not have all the answers. But we have given a great many people—very young children, restless teenagers, men without skills, mothers without proper health care for themselves or their babies, old men and women without a purpose to fill their later years—the opportunity they needed, when they needed it, in a way that called on them to give the best of themselves.

Millions more Americans need—and deserve—that opportunity. The aim of the Administration is, and will be, that they shall have it.

Here are some relevancies with respect to Federal action which bear upon the problem of the cities. They reflect credit upon the President's leadership in urban affairs; they reflect credit on the Congress which has followed that leadership to a great degree. They represent achievements and the opening of the possibilities for additional achievements.

One hundred years after Abraham Lincoln established the Department of Agriculture, cities were given, in 1965, an equal voice in the Cabinet by the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The model cities program of 1966 and the rent supplement program of 1965 provided new and advanced legislative tools for rebuilding cities and improving housing for the poor.

Legislation has been enacted looking to the modernization of city transportation so that Americans may get into and out of and around cities easily, cheaply, and safely.

The Medicare Act of 1965 has provided further alleviation of the burdens of old age for millions of America's poor, many of whom live in cities; 25 million dollars in bills have already been paid under this program.

Minimum wages for 41 million workers were raised in 1966; nearly a million workers have been retrained under new manpower programs.

More than 20 million Americans are receiving decent meals through food stamp and school-lunch programs.

Eight million disadvantaged youngsters, and nearly a million young college students, are today benefiting from the great commitment to education which was made by this Government in the landmark education acts of 1965.

In 1964, pioneer legislation was enacted in an effort to break the dreary line of chronic poverty in America and two million Americans have already risen above that line.

During the past 3 years, we have invested more than $16 billion in new programs of this kind. Additional billions have gone into older programs, such as public assistance, public housing, social security, urban renewal, hospital construction, and unemployment compensation.

These programs have served to meet some of the more gaping of the gaps in metropolitan America and to meet the more urgent needs of millions of urban Americans. A continuance of these programs is essential if we mean even to hold the line against the rapid decay of the cities. If we mean to provide some basis of a promise for a more satisfying future, there are 14 key measures presently before the Congress which should be acted upon without delay. Together, they are a kind of Magna Carta for urban America and for the seven out of 10 Americans who live there.

In his message on the cities in March 1965, the President said:

We must extend the range of choices available to all our people so that all, not just the fortunate, can have access to decent homes and schools, to recreation and to culture. We must work to overcome the forces which divide our people and erode the vitality which comes from the partnership of those with diverse incomes and interests and background.

This eminently responsible and urgent call from the President on behalf of the cities impels a decent, sober, and prompt response from the Congress.

First. Let us provide the $600 million President Johnson has requested for the model cities program this year. In so doing, we will begin to transform the housing, the education, the jobs, and the health care of 6½ million Americans. We will begin the job of rebuilding our cities on a scale approximating the requirements of the closing decades of the 20th century.

Second. Let us provide the $40 million President Johnson has requested for the rent supplement program so that there may be continued this promising effort to provide decent housing for 500,000 poor American families at modest cost. This is the most imaginative and workable program yet devised to make private enterprise a partner in the American goal of a decent home for every citizen. Every $600 of rent supplements will allow industry to build a housing unit worth 20 times that amount.

Third. Let us provide the $20 million President Johnson has requested for the rat control bill. We have had enough of filth, of dirt, of disease. The ghettos, and the poor should be of pervasive and sober concern to all of America—metropolitan and rural.

Fourth. Let us pass the poverty bill and continue, thereby, to provide access to training, guidance, and work opportunities for the Nation's poor; to provide a headstart instead of a handicap to the young of the Nation's poor. The President has requested about $2 billion for this year; let us get it funded in order that this necessary and sensible work may go on.

Fifth. Let us go forward with the Teacher Corps so that thousands of specially trained educators may be mobilized to help meet the educational needs of the ghetto child.

Sixth. Let us pass the Safe Streets and Crime Control Act to strengthen police forces throughout the Nation.

Seventh. Let us meet the administration's request for $80 million for housing for the elderly, so that we may continue the great progress we have made in providing security, comfort, and fulfillment for the older American.

Eighth. Let us provide the $20 million which the President requested for the scientific research and study of the cities in order to make it possible to break new ground in urban development.
Ninth. Let us provide the increases President Johnson has asked in social security so that we may raise the standard of living for millions of retired Americans.

Tenth. Let us strengthen the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and so redouble our efforts to improve every classroom in the land.

Eleventh. Let us act on the civil rights bill so that we may continue to move toward the goal of equal opportunity for all under the Constitution.

Twelfth. Let us provide a reasonable and legitimate gun control bill which, while recognizing the rights and needs of rural States as well as the urban areas, will, at the same time, keep lethal weapons out of the hands of criminals and rioters.

Thirteenth. Let us provide the truth-in-lending bill in order to protect not only the poor but all Americans against fiscal shell games.

Fourteenth. Let us provide the juvenile delinquency bill; that we may improve the prospects for thousands of youngsters skirting the borders of a life of crime.

President Johnson's leadership has pointed the way to meeting the challenge of America's cities. The job cannot be done by the President alone or by the President even with the full cooperation of the Congress. It cannot be done in Washington alone. In the end, what is called for is the commitment and the dedication of Federal agencies and officials, of civic organizations, the mayors of the cities, and the Governors of the States. If we work together, we will get done what none can do by working alone.

We will make a great nation's cities fit for a great nation's people.

Mr. President, under date of August 16, 1967, I have received the following communication from the President, which I will read only in part:

It has long been apparent that the health of our nation can be no better than the health of our cities. Surely not a single American can doubt the urgency of these problems.

Surely not a single American can doubt the health of our nation can be no better than the health of our cities. Surely not a single American can doubt the health of our nation can be no better than the health of our cities.

Just two months after I became President—in January 1964—I sent to the Congress a Special Message on Housing and Community Development. In outlining a series of new proposals for the cities of America, I said: "Whether we achieve our goal of a decent home in a decent neighborhood for every American citizen rests, in large measure, on the action we take now."

Shortly thereafter, I called together some of the most brilliant minds, the most talented planners, and the most experienced urban experts in the nation. Chief among these proposals was the Model Cities Program—the most coordinated, massive, and far-reaching attack on urban blight ever proposed to the Congress. This was not just a federal program. It was designed to stimulate local initiative in the private sector, and at the state, county and local level.

I asked Congress to authorize $2.3 billion for the first six years of this program. Congress reduced that request of $900 million for 2 years.

This year, I requested full funding of the Model Cities—$462 million. The House has already cut that request to $357 million.

In addition, the Congress now has before it a number of other programs proposed by the Administration which are concerned entirely or significantly with the urban problems of our nation. These programs, taken together, represent an all-out commitment to the safety and well-being of our cities and the citizens who live in them:

Mr. President, a list of programs follow. They are 23 in number. I will read them:

Crime control.
Firearms control.
Juvenile delinquency.
Economic Opportunity Act.
Model cities.
Rent supplements.
Urban renewal.
Urban mass transit, advance appropriation.
Urban research.
Neighborhood facilities.
Home rehabilitation.
Family relocation assistance.
Rat extermination.
Elementary-Secondary Education Act.
Manpower Development and Training Act.
Food stamps.
Child nutrition and school lunch program.
Community health services.
Mental health.
Mental retardation.
Hospital modernization (Hill-Burton).
Maternal and infant care.

The letter continues:

All of these programs have been pending before the Congress since the beginning of this session and are included in our January budget.

The task before us is immense. But we have charted a beginning—and we have done so with the help of the best and most experienced minds in the Nation. I believe the enactment and funding of these programs is the first step in making this commitment a reality for the people of America.

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the entire letter printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:


HON. MICHAEL MANSFIELD,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MIKE: It has long been apparent that the health of our nation can be no better than the health of our cities.

In addition, the Congress now has before it a number of other programs proposed by the Administration which are concerned entirely or significantly with the urban problems of our nation. These programs, taken together, represent an all-out commitment to the safety and well-being of our cities and the citizens who live in them:

Programs and funds requested for fiscal year 1968

[In millions of dollars]

Crime control ........................................ 50
Firearms control .................................... 50
Civil Rights Act of 1967 .......................... 25
Juvenile delinquency ................................. 25
Economic Opportunity Act .......................... 662
Model cities ......................................... 2,060
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

Programs and funds requested for fiscal year 1968—Continued

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent supplements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban renewal</td>
<td>750</td>
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<td>Urban mass transit, advance appropriation</td>
<td>230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban research</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Neighborhood facilities</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>Home rehabilitation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family relocation assistance</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rat extermination</td>
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<td>Elementary-Secondary Education Act, 1, 600</td>
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<td>Manpower Development and Training Act</td>
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<td>Food stamps</td>
<td>195</td>
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<td>Child nutrition and school lunch program</td>
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