

OPENING STATEMENT

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

VICE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE

FOR COUNTY OFFICIALS

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JANUARY 19, 1966

Last year the President asked me to act as
his liaison with officials of local government.

Before
HUD

As one who has served in local government --
as Mayor of Minneapolis -- I believe I have some
appreciation of the important role played by local government
in our federal system. Because I know how distant and
remote Washington can seem to the man with local
responsibility, I have been trying, in these months, to
make Washington less distant, less remote, more able to
help. And that is why I invited you to meet with me here
today.

↳ During this past year new federal programs have been undertaken to help local government better serve the needs of our people.

↳ For the future of our nation lies not only with the federal government. It lies in our heartland -- in individual American counties and communities.

↳ The Great Society will be an America made up of thousands of great communities.

↳ It is your counties that will have good schools or bad ones.

It is your counties that will have decent homes or slums.

It is your counties that will have racial harmony or racial antagonism.

It is your counties that will either wage intelligent, coordinated drives on the causes of poverty -- or will ignore this social cancer.

Today there are over 9 million American homes which should not be lived in, but are. Four million of those homes have no running water or plumbing.

There are water shortages.

There are millions of children who will, without a doubt, be on the welfare rolls a few years hence if something is not done. One out of every three children now in fifth grade will not finish high school, if the present dropout rate continues.

There is a general shortage of clean, fresh air . . . of open space . . . of parkland . . . of the things that make life livable.

↳ Nobody in this age of change can meet these demands alone and without help.

That is why we passed breakthrough legislation last year to better help you meet your needs -- legislation for education, for health, for housing, for opportunity, for prosperity.

That is why the President has committed this Administration to even further efforts in the year ahead.

Many of the requests he has made are of vital interest to you.

↳ -- A new Department of Transportation, to pull together programs now spread among 35 government agencies spending 5 billion dollars yearly.

↳ -- Not only continuation of, but acceleration of, the war on poverty.

-- A Teacher Corps, better health measures, and medical resources for rural Americans.

-- A stepped-up program to help modernize and strengthen local police forces, so our people can feel secure in their homes and on the streets.

-- Help to rebuild entire sections and neighborhoods of our urban areas.

-- Proposals to stimulate and to reward planning for the growth of entire metropolitan areas.

-- A Highway Safety Act to seek an end to destruction of life and property on our highways.

-- Appropriations for the rent supplement program.

-- Appropriations and plans to clean the waters of our river systems and make them a source of pleasure and beauty for our people.

-- Establishment of a commission of distinguished Americans to examine our federal system -- the relation between city, state, nation and the citizens themselves.

-- Steps to modernize and streamline the executive branch, to modernize the relations between city and state and nation.

The counties you represent include 63 per cent of the population of this country. Most of your counties are highly urban.

Most of you in this room are directly in the path of spillover from urban centers. People have not only filled the suburbs, but are moving into county lands as well -- and they are bringing with them the problems that plague our cities.

Yours are the only effective or potentially effective government organizations to cope with these problems.

You know local conditions, you know local problems, you know your people.

It is our responsibility to inform you of federal programs. From then on it will be a matter of your determination as to how these programs can be used, and how they can be implemented by local funds.

It is you who must supply the dedication, the talent and the leadership to carry these projects through.

My many years in political life -- in both local and national government -- have taught me that the key to the success of great national programs is local implementation and imaginative local leadership.

Political life has also taught me that antagonisms between local, state and federal levels are too often manufactured to escape responsibility at home.

This is an indulgence none of us can afford.

Our ultimate responsibility as public servants is to improve the quality of the lives of our people.

Our land is rich and fertile. Our industry is prosperous and expanding. Our nation is wealthy and powerful.

We have never yet failed to come up with the qualities of mind and will that are required to meet our responsibilities. I am confident that, working together, we will.

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FOR RELEASE

After 1:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 19, 1966

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