

Written by Malou Mariano (Sender)

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Mayors of Minneapolis, Saint Paul Join Coalition on Second of Two-Day Infrastructure Tour

SAINT PAUL, MN – New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, co-chairs of the Building America's Future coalition, today urged the Republican and Democratic national committees to adopt pro-infrastructure planks in their party platforms when the national party conventions convene in Denver and Minneapolis-Saint Paul.

"America's highways, bridges, tunnels, and mass transit have fallen behind. The same is true for our levees, schools, ports, courthouses and water delivery systems. Our economy and environment are suffering because we cannot move goods and people efficiently – we need a strong federal commitment to tackle this problem," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "We have always come together as a nation to solve our biggest problems and I am confident that if both parties make infrastructure a top priority we will rebuild America with the pride and ambition that reflects the unlimited potential of our people."

"The principles we are advocating will help our nation be more competitive in the global economy, ensure our environmental sustainability, enhance our citizens' quality of life and improve public safety," said Mayor Bloomberg. "They are good public policy and make sound business sense. We need to invest more in our infrastructure and those investment decisions need to be based on merit, not politics."

"The Association of Civil Engineers estimated the nation's total infrastructure shortfall at a staggering \$1.6 trillion," Governor Rendell said. "If we don't act quickly, that deficit will continue to grow and we will see our infrastructure fall further into disrepair, threatening the lives of our citizens and our ability to move goods to market. With the federal government contributing only 25 percent of infrastructure funding and the rest coming from financially strapped state and local governments, Washington needs to step up its commitment of resources. The time to act is now."

The co-chairs recommended that both parties adopt the coalition's five guiding principles in their platforms. Yesterday in New Orleans, the co-chairs proposed, given the importance of the issue and the growing level of support for federal leadership, a town hall meeting on infrastructure and invited both major parties' presidential nominees to participate. Joining the co-chairs at the press conference today were Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Saint Paul

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Mayor Chris Coleman. The mayors are some of the first state and local elected officials to join Building America's Future.

"As mayors, we know how important basic public infrastructure is to our communities," Mayor Rybak said. "Whether it is our streets and highways, mass transit, wastewater, or airport, our ability to make our region competitive for business and a great place to live for our residents depends on the quality of our basic infrastructure — our common ground."

"We also recognize that only the federal government has the resources to partner with state and local governments to fully fund our regional and national infrastructure priorities," Mayor Coleman said. Today's event in Minneapolis-Saint Paul caps a two-day infrastructure tour that took Bloomberg and Rendell to New Orleans on Thursday. In an address to the National Conference of State Legislatures, or NCSL, Bloomberg and Rendell unveiled Building America's Future's statement of principles, which will guide policy makers as they chart a new course for national infrastructure policy. The co-chairs also held a press conference announcing that 20 more state legislators from across the country joined the coalition.

In recent weeks, the coalition's leaders addressed the National Governors Association summer meeting in Philadelphia, the U.S. Conference of Mayors annual meeting in Miami, and the National Association of Counties summer meeting in Kansas City as it continues recruiting state and local elected officials to join its ranks.

State and local elected officials who wish to join Building America's Future can register at www.InvestInInfrastructure.org

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Building America's Future statement of principles is available at www.InvestInInfrastructure.org

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