

# YEO Frontline News

August 2006

## Greetings YEOs;

*As summer draws to a close, we are excited to bring you our final summer edition of YEO Frontline News. I would like to remind each of you to join our August Telebrief, which this month will focus on "Running for a Leadership Position." Fellow YEOs will lead this session, and it will include helpful information to assist you in navigating leadership posts at your respective levels of government.*

*Although you may have been on vacation, the staff of YEO has been diligently watching the radical Right continue to eat away our nations' democratic principles. Local governments in Alabama, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey have all passed anti-immigration ordinances discriminating against foreigners, with more cities soon to follow. Local marriage ordinances have also surfaced in U.S. cities, with the simple goal of further dividing American voters. There are issues affecting real people, like affordable healthcare, a living wage, energy independence, and education, which our leaders are conveniently avoiding in order to stir a cultural and morally superficial debate.*

*The leadership of courageous policy makers like yourself is needed now more than ever! Over the next several months the YEO Network will work hard to offer you information and resources that will best equip you to defend the beliefs that unite us as a nation. Please feel free to contact YEO staff if we can be of any assistance to you.*

*In the Spirit of Democracy,*

Andrew D. Gillum

## Front Line Leaders Academy: Bringing YEOs and Young People Together for a Progressive Tomorrow



The second training session of Front Line Leaders Academy (FLLA), a six month program which provides leadership development and political skills training, took place in Detroit from July 28-30. This learning circle focused on field development and campaign management. The 20 fellows received training from Wellstone Action, campaign managers, and Young Elected Officials.

Fellows learned the nitty-gritty details of field development with new YEO Network Member and Wellstone Action trainer school board member in Minneapolis. Minnesota State Representative Neva Walker also provided training on GOTV efforts and early voting.

The Campaign Managers session was filled with candidate-manager interaction and discussions with seasoned campaign professionals. YEO trainers included Battle Creek, Mich. City Commissioner Ryan Hersha, Michigan State Representative Andy Meisner and Representative Walker.

We thank all the YEOs that participated in this successful training, and we send a special thank you to the YEOs that joined us for our reception dinner Friday, July 28. Michigan County Commissioner Dave Woodward and State Representative Steven Tobocman were a wonderful addition to our reception, lending their time and support to eager fellows.

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*(L to R) MN State Rep. Neva Walker, MI State Rep. Andy Meisner, Tallahassee Comm. Andrew Gillum, GA State Rep. Alisha Thomas-Morgan, Battle Creek Comm. Ryan Hersha, and Minneapolis School Board Member Peggy Flanagan.*

## PROGRESSIVE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



### Drum Major Institute for Public Policy

Many organizations track legislators' votes on specific issues of concern – abortion, the environment, or civil liberties, just to name a few. But who's keeping track of Congress' record on the broad array of issues concerning the majority of Americans who are middle class or aspire to be? For the last three years, the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy (DMI) has done just that, with a series of annual "Middle-Class Scorecards."

Rather than defining the middle class as an income group, DMI evaluates policies that will secure and expand Americans' access to a middle-class standard of living, including a well-paying job, health insurance, the chance to own a home, the opportunity to provide a good education for their children, and the security of looking forward to a dignified retirement. According to DMI, those Americans trying to hold onto or attain this standard of living constitute the nation's middle class and aspiring middle class.

The latest Scorecard, "Congress at the Midterm: Their 2005 Middle Class Record" grades legislators on 11 votes over the course of the year, handing out negative assessments for votes in favor of punitive bankruptcy legislation and repealing the estate tax, while awarding points to those who voted to raise the minimum wage and strengthen Social Security.

DMI's overall assessment is grim: "In vote after vote, Congress disdained the concerns of middle class Americans and opted instead to favor the already wealthy and powerful: a surefire recipe for a shrinking middle class." Noting that the vast majority of senators and representatives earned a grade of C or less, DMI concludes: "An average performance is simply not good enough... middle class Americans deserve better."

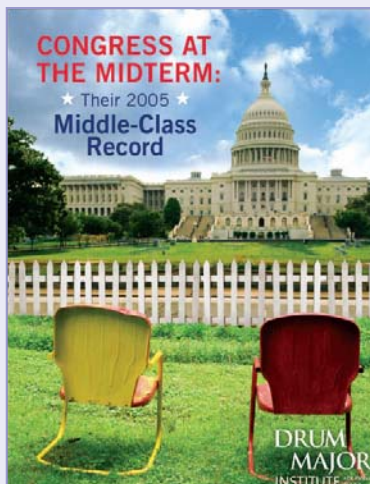
#### Resources:

"Congress at the Midterm" is available online at <http://www.drummajorinstitute.com/congress/>

#### Contact:

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Drum Major Institute for Public Policy  
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*Provided by Amy Traub, Associate Director of Research at Drum Major Institute of Public Policy.*



## FLLA Report Continued



### YEO Impressions:

#### City Commissioner Ryan Hersha, Battle Creek, MI

#### ***On careers in campaigns and candidacy:***

"A young person considering a life in politics must, above all things, develop a strong sense of their personal values. I'm not talking about values that a campaign presents but the values a human being holds on to when no one is looking. Without a strong sense of their personal values, a well-meaning individual stands little chance of effecting meaningful change."

#### ***On why YEOs should get involved with FLLA:***

1. The YEO and YP4 staff is great and extremely helpful.
2. It's personally satisfying to meet and help the next generation of progressive leaders.
3. If you're not careful, you may pick up a good idea or two yourself."



Battle Creek Michigan Commissioner Ryan Hersha addresses the audience at a joint reception with YEO Network partners YP4 and Center for Progressive Leadership during the FLLA conference.

## SPECIAL FEATURE BY A YEO: *Housing: A Florida Crisis, a National Problem,*

*By Dave Aronberg, Florida State Senator*

This past session, I worked to alleviate the workforce housing shortage here in Florida. The issue is important in itself, but it also affects so many other issues in my district and in our state. The lack of affordable housing hurts homeland security, as police officers and firefighters are unable to afford living in the area. It hurts education when we are unable to attract teachers to live here because of the cost of living. It thwarts business development when a workforce can't afford to live here. It even impacts transportation, as it worsens traffic congestion because everyone is forced to commute on the same roads.

The increase in home values has far exceeded the increase in income levels in Florida. Home prices in my district have skyrocketed: the median home in Palm Beach County costs more than \$400,000. How are teachers, firefighters, and local business owners going to live at these rates?

Last session, our Legislature started taking action to help this crisis. I passed legislation to create a specialty license plate that will generate millions of dollars each year for Homeownership For All, Inc., a nonprofit organization that funds programs to promote, provide, and support affordable housing in Florida.

I also co-sponsored an affordable housing bill that provided 540 million dollars to help alleviate the crisis. Local governments have traditionally been the main players in addressing the affordable housing problem, but state governments can affect change as well.

Local governments can continue to do their part by providing incentives to developers, such as lowered impact fees or mitigation credits, in exchange for homes that working people can afford. We should also encourage infill, demolishing the dilapidated structures inside our cities and rebuilding the area with affordable housing. Local governments can encourage this by waiving any delinquent property taxes and fees on the properties.

Despite these efforts, Florida is not in the clear just yet. With one hand our Legislature provided more money for affordable housing, but with the other hand the Legislature took money away by capping the Sadowski Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I see this as a breach of trust, since the fund is a "trust" with the taxpayers. When they agreed to the fund, they said yes to higher document stamp taxes in exchange for the money to fund affordable housing. Now with the trust fund capped, much of the money will go into the general budget fund. This is not the trust we established with our people.

### Florida Housing Stats

**The median price of a home in Florida jumped 21 percent in the last year to \$248,600.**

**In the past four years, the median price of a home has increased more than 75 percent while median household income has only increased 1.4 percent.**

Every public servant, whether at the state or local level, has the responsibility to ensure that their residents have a place to live and the ability to make their community prosper. Affordable housing is not just a Florida crisis, it is a national problem.

*Please see Housing on Page 5*



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## **ISSUE OF THE MONTH:**

### ***Housing: YIMBY -- Yes, in my backyard!***

Minnesota State Representative Neva Walker grew up watching her mother help people. Mrs. Walker worked assisting others find affordable housing, rehabilitation, and reasonable loans for more than 28 years.

Representative Walker never meant to follow in mom's footsteps, but the apparent housing crisis in her community moved her to action. In a pattern seen in many parts of the country, the high cost of buying and renting in her community kept people in slums. Increases in application fees and down payments made housing unaffordable, and illegal evictions put people on the streets without a place to call home.

While solutions are not coming fast enough, Representative Walker is looking at options to solve the problem. For example, when tenants are illegally evicted today, the eviction stays on their credit records for seven years. Local governments are now looking into the potential for expungements that will clear those records, and help people get back on their feet and into affordable housing. Walker is also dealing with NIMBY (not in my back yard) movements that seek to keep affordable housing out of neighborhoods. She's educating residents about the hard-working families who need affordable housing, such as teachers' aides, bus drivers, health care workers, and many more.



#### Minnesota Housing Stats:

- **As many as 350,000 (one in five) Minnesota households face a housing cost burden**
- **More than 21,000 Minnesotans are homeless or precariously housed**
- **More than 1,000 Minnesotans are turned away from shelters each night; as many as half of them are children**

Another housing concern Walker is addressing goes beyond affordable housing to supportive housing. For homeless veterans, people with chemical dependencies or a history of drug abuse, and people with psychological troubles, supportive housing is a wonderful alternative to life on the streets.

Walker is realistic, but argues that while affordable housing costs a lot of money, policy changes do not. Some solutions to housing costs problems can be achieved with policy changes, such as a property tax cap for senior citizens or making sure that when new housing developments are approved, they provide affordable housing options. Consumer education is also critical, she adds. To help prevent foreclosures, individuals must be educated on what they are buying, and what they can truly afford, information that high school and college students should know before they make early credit or housing mistakes.

#### **Other YEOs in Minnesota**



**Minnesota State Representative John Lesch** has been on the forefront in the effort to prevent mortgage bankers from the unscrupulous practice of "equity stripping." Because of the rise in home prices, many people in foreclosure still have significant equity in their homes. These homeowners are often led to believe their home can be saved by refinancing. Often they end up owing more per month than before the foreclosure and are quickly forced out of the house. In most cases, the homeowners receive little or nothing for their home equity.

In response to the housing needs of veterans with disabilities, **State Representative Katie Sieben** worked to secure funding for permanent supportive housing on the campus of the Minnesota Veterans Home in Hastings, Minn. This legislation will pay for the building of 30 units of permanent supportive housing that will be managed and supported by the Veterans Home staff.



While housing solution bills are not going far in the Minnesota legislature right now, progressives are not stopping their efforts. In 2005, Reps. Walker, Lesch, and Sieben supported legislation that appropriated \$12 million of general obligation bond proceeds to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) for the development of publicly owned supportive housing for individuals facing long-term homelessness. In 2006, more than \$19 million was appropriated— \$17 million for Permanent Supportive Housing, which will benefit people who are disabled and chronically homeless, and \$2 million for transitional housing programs for people moving beyond emergency homeless shelters.

In addition, the legislators will continue to fight for state funding for critical services that address homelessness for society's most vulnerable citizens.

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## YEO Affordable Housing Efforts in Other States

### **LA City Council President Eric Garcetti, CALIFORNIA**

A \$1 billion bond measure that would help provide housing for thousands of low-income residents and enable others to become first-time homeowners was recently endorsed unanimously by the city council. The proposed bond measure would contribute financing for about 1,000 new affordable housing units annually over the next decade. "Good housing improves communities, no matter what income level," said Council President Eric Garcetti, one of the measure's sponsors. "What we're talking about is something that gives us the tools to make communities more livable."

### **New York City Councilman Eric Gioia, NEW YORK**

Affordable housing advocates in Queens have scored two victories. Silvercup West's massive waterfront development project will add 150 affordable housing units to their project after negotiations with the city council. In another victory, the city planning department approved an amendment to the rezoning of Woodside and Maspeth that will encourage middle class housing along 20 blocks of Queens Boulevard. "We need to be bold and we need to be creative and use every tool we have to create new opportunities for affordable housing," said Councilman Gioia.

### **Austin City Councilmember Jennifer Kim, TEXAS**

Austin City Councilmember Jennifer Kim wants to start a task force of people from various neighborhood groups and associations, advocacy organizations, and business professionals to recommend ideas about incentives for building affordable housing. The group would suggest possible incentives for builders to include affordable units in their projects or ways to dedicate resources for the development of affordable housing in the downtown area.

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## Housing

*By Dave Aronberg,  
Florida State Senator*

*Continued from Page 3*

### Q&A

#### **YEO Newsletter**

**(YEON):** How do you find progressive policy to help with housing issues? Where do you find best practices?



#### **State Senator Dave Aronberg (DA):**

Well there's this great thing called the YEO conference. I actually learned a lot there. And there is also NCSL – The National Conference of State Legislators. I learn from talking to people from other communities and seeing what they've done in their areas.

**YEON:** Where should YEOs go if they want more information about the policies you've worked with in Florida?

**DA:** They should all feel free to call my office at 561-433-2627 or visit my web site at [www.senatordave.com](http://www.senatordave.com). I'd be happy to help.

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## YOUNG ELECTED OFFICIAL OF THE MONTH

### **Austin King**

***Alderman and President of  
Madison Common Council  
Madison, Wisconsin***



"Here comes the troublemaker." Austin King, like many young elected officials, has been given that nickname by his colleagues on the Council. But being a troublemaker isn't so bad, especially when those same colleagues elect him president of the Madison, Wisconsin Common Council.

Born in Minneapolis, Minn., King attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He became very active with a variety of issues, including the campus anti-sexual assault campaign where he helped organize teach-ins for the fraternities and other organizations to educate them about male privilege and how to prevent sexual assault. He also worked closely with his friend and then Alderman, mostly serving in campaign management roles before he decided to run himself. Elected to the Madison Common Council in 2003 at the age of 21, King represents a primarily young, college student district in Madison.

King has fought many battles by building strong coalitions on issues that affect working people. He deems his biggest accomplishment the passing of the minimum wage increase in Madison. His ordinance prompted three other major cities in Wisconsin to pass a minimum wage increase as well, forcing the state to take action. As a result, the ordinance has helped more than 17,000 Madison residents and the statewide increase has helped over 200,000 Wisconsin residents.

*Please see Austin King on Page 7*

## PROGRESSIVE POLICY CORNER

### Inclusionary Housing Ordinance

**Target Government:** City and County Boards/ Other local government entities

**Policy Category:** Affordable/ Workforce Housing

**Possible Allies:** Community groups, consumer advocated, teachers' unions and police unions.

#### Synopsis

This ordinance applies to new developments in specified locations within the City of Tallahassee.

As a result of this ordinance, at least 10 percent of the housing units in the development now must be priced no higher than \$159,378 and sold to eligible households or 15 percent of the housing units must be rented at affordable rates and rented to eligible households.

A variety of development incentives, including a 25 percent density bonus, design flexibility, and transportation concurrency exemption are available in exchange for providing inclusionary housing.

When inclusionary housing became a mandatory requirement on October 1, 2005, it applied to all developments of 50 or more housing units in applicable areas. Additional methods of compliance are available, including payment of a fee into the City's inclusionary housing trust fund, and providing inclusionary housing at "off-site" locations.

#### Resources

**Link to Legislation:** [http://www.talgov.com/planning/pdf/af\\_inch/104o90aa.pdf](http://www.talgov.com/planning/pdf/af_inch/104o90aa.pdf)

**Implementation Procedures:** [http://www.talgov.com/planning/pdf/af\\_inch/citypcy1103.pdf](http://www.talgov.com/planning/pdf/af_inch/citypcy1103.pdf)

#### Interview with YEO Tallahassee, Fla. City Comm. Andrew Gillum

**YEO Newsletter (YEON):** What were some of the challenges that you faced while trying to pass this ordinance?

**Andrew D. Gillum (ADG):** There were several. The developers and builders association provided the most opposition to this ordinance. There was also backlash from members of the community who believed that some people are "supposed" to be denied access to the best neighborhoods and schools. Finally, a developer has filed a lawsuit challenging the program's legal standing.

**YEON:** Why is passage of the legislation important?

**ADG:** Like many other communities around the country, the housing market in Tallahassee is growing increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible for the average wage worker. Soon our communities' teachers, fire fighters, police officers, and other essential workers will no longer be able to afford to own a home. Development continues to increase, requiring new schools, new parks, new roads, and other infrastructure to support growth. Older community infrastructure has been neglected as decision makers turn their attention to supporting new growth and an expanded tax base. More and more average tax payer dollars have been diverted to fund sprawling growth and development. Newer communities received the most technologically advanced schools, newer parks and other modern amenities, all funded by the larger taxpaying community. While the local government could not stop developers from charging more if people were willing to pay more, we could at least require that the developers set aside a portion of their new developments for more moderate wage earners. In addition, my commission has refused to extend the urban services area and has imposed additional growth restrictions designed to drive development back to the urban core and reduce sprawl.

## TIPS:

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

### Making the Most of your Media Interviews

Media interviews don't have to be frightening when they catch you off guard. The trick is to know your message and be prepared. Here are a few media do's and don'ts from media consultant Jim Cameron.

- **Do** know what you want to get across in the interview. Build a bridge of words from the reporter's question to your messages, and say them several times during the interview.
- **Do** find out as much as you can about the reporter and the story before you agree to an interview. Have they covered your issues before? Who else are they talking to for this story? Do you really want to be in that mix? You can always politely decline an interview.
- **Don't** be afraid to admit that you don't know the answer to a question. Instead, offer to find the answer and get back to the reporter before their deadline. Never respond to questions based on unfamiliar facts.
- **Don't** be rushed into answering. Don't feel obliged to fill "dead air" after a tricky question. Just pause, think, and then answer.
- **Don't** look into the camera. Instead, look at whoever is talking. And remember: you are always potentially on camera, even if someone else is talking.
- **Don't** wait for the media to come looking for you. Reach out to them with story ideas, professional commentary, and fresh ideas. Call your local papers, radio stations, and TV networks to introduce yourself to the reporters covering your issues.

Source: Jim Cameron, 2001 in *All About Public Relations* with Steven R. Van Hook <http://www.aboutpublicrelations.net/uccameron.htm>

If you have tips or advice that will make our lives easier, send them to us at [dwhite@pfaw.org](mailto:dwhite@pfaw.org)

### ALEC Conference Brings Increased Focus on Health Care

*The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a far-right conservative organization that advocates an agenda of right-wing legislation in key areas of state policy. The organization provides joint leadership roles for a multitude of corporations and associations who “pay to play” in all levels of the organization and its task forces. Below is a summary of their annual conference in San Francisco by PFAWF State Legislative Programs Manager Ellie Collinson.*

ALEC’s 33rd Annual Conference included keynotes by noted school voucher advocate Milton Friedman, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, and U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. It featured 46 exhibitors from various trade associations, companies, and right-wing interest groups. Attendance hovered at 750-1,000 during convening sessions, but was notably sparse considering the location and election year cycle.

Workshop sessions focused a great deal on “Fair Share” health care, along with the Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maryland plans. There was a subcommittee work session, keynote speech, and task force session dedicated to school voucher programs—notably an autism-specific special needs voucher based on legislation passed this year in Ohio. There were also four different workshop sessions dedicated to various aspects of environmental policy.

Immigration, another hot button issue for the left and the right, did not play a large role in the conference setting. I suspect there may be more discussion at ALEC’s States and Nation Policy Summit in Phoenix this December. Immigration was addressed only in a workshop session; no pieces of model legislation were reviewed nor were any ALEC platforms discussed. In fact, the panelists were in significant disagreement with one another over policy approaches to the issue.

For more information on specific ALEC workshops or copies of model legislation that were approved at the conference, please contact Ellie at [ecollinson@pfa.org](mailto:ecollinson@pfa.org) or (800) 326-7329 ext 2374. Ellie is also available to answer questions about model legislation or lobbying activities at your state legislature.

### YEO OF THE MONTH: AUSTIN KING

*Continued from Page 5*

Alderman King is currently fighting the resurfacing of a loitering ordinance, which lowers the threshold for police officers to make arrests in certain areas. This is not a new issue for him – King was a consistent opponent of the measure during his college years. He says that this ordinance disproportionately affects minorities in Madison, where research showed that over 89% of the tickets were issued to African American males in a community where less than 9% of residents were African American. Housing has become a major issue for King as well, making sure that residents are not denied housing because they lack a social security card. His most recent battle is with absent landlords. King is working to enable tenants to contract out for repairs in their homes and deduct the costs from their rent.

#### Biggest Hurdle

He overcame being viewed as a radical by building strong coalitions in the community. He says, “It’s hard for people to get around that.” Seeing the community support or opposition on an issue helps his colleagues focus on the issue rather than on the Alderman.

#### Something most people don’t know

Austin King plays the bass guitar and used to be in a “hippy jam” band that traveled all over the state of Wisconsin and elsewhere. He also enjoys his new found hobby of tennis and has become quite the connoisseur of the local breweries in Madison.

#### Advice to other YEOs

“If you are an activist, exercise some patience.” He also encourages YEOs to do their homework. President King says he has won several battles because the opponent was lazy. He says, “It’s really about doing your homework and out-hustling your opponent.”



Madison Common Council President Austin King kicks off his paid sick leave campaign at a press conference.

For more information on Alderman King, the Madison Common Council Web site at <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/council/District08/index.html>.

## Right-Wing Watch: Special Report

### Landmark Civil Rights Law Renewed

Despite right-wing efforts to derail reauthorization of key temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) set to expire in 2007, Sections 203, 5, and 6-9 were renewed for another 25 years.

Section 203 requires jurisdictions with citizens who are limited in English proficiency to be provided with language assistance. Section 5 requires federal courts to approve all changes to voting procedures, such as redistricting, made by jurisdictions with a history of discrimination, and Sections 6 through 9 allow the federal government to send federal examiners and observers to monitor elections.

The most contentious battle took place in the House, where ultraconservative members introduced four amendments that would have significantly weakened the intent of the VRA. The Voting Rights Act coalition of civil rights, religious, and civic participation groups across the country quickly organized and responded to these outlandish attacks. Once each amendment was defeated in the House, members voted overwhelmingly (390-33) in favor of passing the VRA reauthorization bill. The VRA faced less opposition in the Senate, where Senators voted 98-0 to pass H.R. 9.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, (seen being signed below) the most effective civil rights statute ever enacted, eliminated poll taxes and literacy tests, and has protected generations of minority voters from discrimination at the polls. It was a great victory for the civil rights community but we must continue to pressure the Bush Administration to enforce all provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

For more information on the Voting Rights Act, contact PFAWF's Sergio Lopez at [slopez@pfaw.org](mailto:slopez@pfaw.org) or 202-467-2363.

*Provided by Sergio Lopez, Field Coordinator in the Field Department of People For the American Way Foundation.*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: 27th Annual National Convention

September 20- 23, 2006 Philadelphia, PA  
<http://www.usbcc.com>

### Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund: 32nd Annual Los Angeles Dinner

November 9, 2006 Los Angeles, CA  
<http://www.maldef.org>

### The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators: 4th National Summit

November 16-19, 2006 TBD  
<http://www.nhcsli.org>

### National Black Caucus of State Legislators: 30th Annual Legislative Conference

November 27-December 3, 2006 Jackson, MS  
<http://www.nbcsli.com>

### The Council of State Governments: Annual State Trends and Leadership Forum

November 30-December 3, 2006 Phoenix, AZ  
<http://www.csg.org>

### National Conference of State Legislators: Fall Forum

December 5-8, 2006 San Antonio, TX  
<http://www.ncsl.org>

### National League of Cities: 83rd Congress of Cities and Exposition

December 5- 9, 2006 Reno, Nevada  
<http://www.nlc.org>



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*A program of People For the American Way Foundation*

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