



Los Angeles: A Portal to the World for the United States

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Ladies and gentlemen, I understand that Stanford Professor, Paul Saffo tells us that the landscape of our future looks more like Italy in the 13th century, which is actually funny because if you remember during my swearing in I talked about L.A. as the Venice of the 21st century, as the crossroads with the portals to the East and the South, as a city where some 37 different nationalities have their largest population here outside of their country of origin. This morning I was celebrating the Nowtuz, the first day of spring in the Iranian community. Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis and Filipinos, African-Americans—Jews, this is the city that has an incredible diversity, but it's also a city-state in many ways as well. This is an era when centers of power, economy and competencies lay not on a national level but they're bundled in regions; an era of city-states, where the actions of cities are making an impact on a global level and when local leaders are playing starring roles on the global stage.

People ask me a lot, I'm not being partisan at this moment, why would the Mayor of Los Angeles leave sunny Los Angeles for Marshalltown and Muscatine, Iowa; for Keen, New Hampshire; Nevada or Texas? And I'll tell you why, it's very simple, this is the most important election in my lifetime. I think no matter where you stand on the ideological spectrum—Democrat or Republican, left or right—it's probably the most important election in your lifetime as well. What we see in America today is very little leadership coming from the Beltway, from Washington, very little in the way of new ideas. Where we see the action, if you will, is in the cities and yet so much of the funds come from the federal government. Historically, federal partnerships are the key to the blooming and flowering of our cities. Some 88 percent of all the wealth created in America is created in American cities. When I'm greeted in China, Japan, Korea or Mexico by heads of state, I understand why that is and it has everything to do with the fact that I represent a city-state. If Los Angeles were a nation with its own flag and spoke its own language, we would be the seventeenth largest economy in the world. When you think about that, when you think about the void of leadership left in the wake of federal inaction, it is time, and I think you're seeing this across the country, that cities step forward. They're stepping up on traffic, on decaying infrastructure, immigration, failing schools, counterterrorism, homelessness and, perhaps more than any other, on global climate change.

We in Los Angeles first caught a glimpse of our international wattage on climate change two years ago. Then President Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair bypassed a dormant Washington to plant a seed for a short-cut to Kyoto here in the city of Los Angeles. I had the honor of hosting them that day. I remember pinching my cheek. I had been with President Clinton many times and I'd hosted Tony Blair as well, but to be with two people who I think are

the two best political leaders in a generation in the world, speaking about the issue of climate change said so much about why cities are important at this time.

Twenty-two mayors of the largest cities across the world signed a pact to lower carbon emissions more effectively and more efficiently than even Kyoto requires. Since then cities from Seattle to New Jersey, laid out aggressive plans to cut their carbon footprints. London turned heads around the world when it introduced a bold plan to penalize every driver entering the city. Paris reintroduced the bicycle and here in a city blessed with solar and wind power we're leading the pack on renewable energy, meticulously following forward on a goal of 20 percent renewable by the year 2010, thirty percent renewable by 2020. Think about this for a second: the state is leading the nation, a nation where our president a year ago talked about our addiction to foreign oil and has done absolutely nothing to address it since then. During that time cities across the nation are signing on, some 800 mayors have signed on to Kyoto.

When I became mayor of L.A., we were at two percent renewables the dirtiest municipal power agency in the country. We're now at 8.5 renewables and we'll be at 20 percent by 2010, leading the state that's leading the nation, which will be at twenty percent by 2017. Our goal is to be the cleanest, greenest big city in the United States of America. We're leading the way by showing the state what can be done and the nation and the world as well. In this era of city-states I believe that L.A. is uniquely in position to be the Venice of the 21st century not just because we are a city-state but, as I said, because we're uniquely poised, a gateway to the East and the South.

I'm the first in 133 years to be elected from my community as mayor of the city, what I said when there was some concern about what that meant in the city, is get over it. I'm the first but I won't be the last, there will be many more. So many people were excited by it once they got beyond the fear of change and the like, so many people whether they were Korean, or women, or people from every community, what it said to them is "my kid can do it, too." What it said to them is that in this city we don't care who your father is, we don't care who your mother is. In this city if you can do it, then do it. That, I think, is what makes L.A. so special. It's not just that we're a large city-state with a large economy, not just that we're uniquely poised geographically with the rising economies in the East and the rising market in the south it's not just because of our diversity.

The vibrancy of what L.A.'s all about, what makes us the Venice of the 21st century, is precisely the strength that L.A. has in this convergence of all of these dynamic factors. As Angelinos we come from more than 140 different countries, speak some 224 different languages and as I said over 37 nationalities have their largest population here outside of their country of origin. How many other cities can boast of having a Little Ethiopia, a Little Persia, a Little Armenia, a Little Tokyo? And also a Chinatown, a Koreatown, a Thai town, a historic Filipino town and, of course, let's not forget Tinseltown. Our market is surging with over \$420 billion in commerce in just the L.A. County area. If you talk about the L.A. Metropolitan area that number is closer to \$650 billion, larger than the national economies in countries like Taiwan, Belgium, Saudi Arabia, Norway and Turkey. Our writers and producers are telling stories making the music defining culture not just here but around the world, ports moving the goods that are moving the national economy. Some 43 percent of all the seaborne goods that enter the United States, enter through our ports.

I'll tell you about the future that I see. I see where Los Angeles is the city where the world comes together, a financial logistical bridge, linking Asia and the Americas, the nerve center connecting investors with the import-export markets of China, Korea, Mexico, Japan and beyond. We're

expanding our already strong logistics sector and building on the enormous potential of our leading seaports and airports.

Those of you who live in the city and travel around the world know that when it comes to LAX it's an embarrassment. Being absolutely candid, we haven't done anything to modernize this airport in 20 odd years, since the Olympics in 1984. Already, in two and one-half years we're moving ahead and now finally modernizing our international terminal, the Tom Bradley International Terminal. We're moving ahead on the midfield concourse which will connect Tom Bradley and be an opportunity for us to land the 838s that will come from New Zealand, Asia and other places of the world. We're daring to be the center of cutting edge technology.

We believe that there's a connection between growing green, being the cleanest, greenest big city in America while at the same time growing the new technology, the new green collar jobs that are connected with that vision. We're supporting the growth of emerging sectors like new media with a vision of transforming L.A. into a digital city where the technology and entertainment industries converge. We haven't taken advantage of the fact that we have a burgeoning, very strong, fashion industry. We're about sixth or seventh in the world in fashion. We want to be number one; we're actually the number one employer in fashion apparel in the United States. We've passed New York. Why not here where fashion meets entertainment and music, the entertainment capital of the world? Why not here where the creative economy, 455,000 jobs, is larger than anywhere, not just in the United States, but the world?

I believe being a global city requires more than a web of networks across the world. We have the means to be more than just being the portal for 44 percent of container goods flowing into America. This we are. Being a global city in an era of city-states will require the foresight to view every policy decision through a bifocal; to see the issues that our families and communities face day to day, while not losing focus on the big picture of our role in the world. It means using our leverage, not only to set the pace for good global citizenship but using our unique position to catalyze meaningful change.

I believe that a truly global city means having the power to cause a righteous ripple that becomes an unstoppable wave. Nowhere, in L.A. will our credibility as that kind of leader be tested more than in the ports of Los Angeles in Long Beach. The ports are not the splashiest material for the evening news, I know that. For a long time, just like with the airport, there's been kind of a butting of the heads. We have a port that has to grow; we're the gateway to the East and south, we move more goods than any seaport in the United States of America, but we're also a port that has created a great deal of pollution, that actually impacts the public health in a very serious way. Twenty-six percent of all pollution in the region comes from the port. More than 3,000 premature deaths are created by port activity. Early on in my campaign and as mayor I said, "Look, we have to create a new paradigm. For the longest time we had leadership who said, "We have to grow the port" and they went almost nowhere with that without a fight. Every time we tried to grow the port we were sued by the environmentalists, by the public health advocates, by the communities around us. On the other end, we had the environmentalists who said, "We have to green the port, but we shouldn't grow it." And so, what do we do? We put together an effort to get people to talk to one another, an effort to get them to look at the synergy, the inter-connectedness of growing and greening the port, of making it a better port for the communities around us but also continuing its role as the most significant seaport in the United States. We did that because we recognized our role in the world, we're doing that because we recognize what comes with trade and commerce in these times.

I had an opportunity to go to China, Japan and Korea. It was a very successful trip for us. It brought home a lot of investment and we were able to make and connect investments from here over there as well. But probably the most important thing that we came back with is the knowledge, the education, the heightened consciousness that comes with the fact that we realized that we're not the only people in the world. What is the World Affairs Council about if it's not trying to recognize that while America is without question a beacon of hope and light to the world, it is also a part of the world, not separate and apart, not so distinctive, so special that everyone else is not somehow connected. We are connected with the world. When we celebrate the diversity that we have and when we make it work in the way that we do in this city, what do we say about America? We say it is a special place, because this is the only place where Pakistanis and Indians actually work with one another, where Croats and Serbs live next door to one another, where the many peoples that make up the world live in harmony and peace, sometimes conflict but that's what happens when you live with one another.

So, I believe that it's very, very important to do something about this port and more importantly it's what the port represents to the city and the nation. When you look the world today, America is a very isolated place and again I don't say that as a partisan. If any of you travel, you know that people react very differently than they did five years ago, ten years ago, and certainly a generation ago. It is incumbent on us to use organizations like this as opportunities for the world to talk together, as opportunities for us to work together, as opportunities for us to connect in a different way. I think that's why you're so important and why I wanted to be here today.

I recognize that in these times there are difficult issues that come even when you are talking. Talking doesn't mean that all the problems of the world will be solved with that conversation, but the one thing you know is that when you are talking, when you are learning about one another, there's a respect, a tolerance, an understanding, an empathy. New information that comes is helpful in helping us solve the problems that we face in the world.

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