

THE URBAN COALITION
1819 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006

October, 1967

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL COALITIONS

On August 24 in Washington, D. C., the Emergency Convocation of The Urban Coalition issued an urgent appeal to all concerned American citizens to join with the Coalition in efforts to fashion a new political, social, economic, and moral climate that will make possible the breaking of the vicious cycle of the ghetto. Action at the community level must now follow.

As leaders in your community, your commitment and ingenuity are now called upon to muster the support and involvement of your fellow citizens for a massive reordering of both national and local priorities in the face of the unresolved urban emergency.

The Urban Coalition looks to you to initiate formation of a local coalition in your city or metropolitan area to work in concert with the National Steering Committee in pursuit of common objectives.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the August Emergency Convocation, The Urban Coalition adopted a comprehensive Statement of Principles, Goals and Commitments. It is this document which charts the course for our mutual efforts. (A copy of the Statement is enclosed.)

You will note from the Statement that the Coalition has identified seven specific areas of urban affairs calling for action by the Coalition and the nation. Emergency Task Forces have been created reflecting these problem areas. They are:

1. Emergency Task Force on Public Service Employment
2. Emergency Task Force on Private Employment and Entrepreneurship
3. Emergency Task Force on Educational Disparities
4. Emergency Task Force on Housing Reconstruction and Investment
5. Emergency Task Force on Equal Housing Opportunities
6. Emergency Task Force on Communications and Public Support
7. Emergency Task Force on Local Coalitions

The Statement of Goals adopted by the Coalition makes clear that the key to resolving these inter-related problems is a massive emergency work program of at least one million new public service-type jobs, developed and financed by the Federal Government, including new training opportunities for the

unemployed and underemployed. The elements of such an emergency work program are described in the Statement.

Such a program is a prerequisite to the restoration of economic health to our cities and hope to the lives of millions of urban Americans. The pervasive social and economic costs of continued high levels of unemployment and underemployment in our cities can spell further disaster to our society. The alternative is to implement a crash, national, employment program of the character The Urban Coalition proposes.

The business of The Urban Coalition is to induce a complete revision in the allocation of talent, time, money and resources to meeting the basic needs of America's cities. While special emphasis has been given in The Coalition's Statement to the basic need for full employment, this is not to minimize the urgent needs for new capital investment, revitalized public education, substantial increases in the housing supply, more and better urban services and facilities, and enhanced equal opportunity in housing. The Statement adds that the "next order of business...shall be the development of a broad program of urban reconstruction...including the goal of rehabilitation and construction of at least one million housing units for lower-income families annually."

All sectors of American society have a role to play in accomplishing the goals The Urban Coalition has proposed. Awakening those sectors to the emergency at hand and mobilizing them for appropriate action is the immediate task. Essential to The Urban Coalition's performing that task is the formation of local coalitions which will first, pledge their support of the Statement of Principles, Goals and Commitments, and second, work in concert with the National Steering Committee, with all resources available to them, to accomplish these goals.

STRATEGY AND AGENDA FOR LOCAL COALITIONS

As an initial target, the Steering Committee of The Urban Coalition is responding to the requests of communities in at least fifty major urban areas for assistance in the formation of local coalitions by the end of November, 1967. As is the case with the Steering Committee, these local organizing committees will be made up of representatives from the community's business, organized labor, religious, civil rights, educational, local government, and communications leadership. It is important that the sectors represented correspond with those represented on the National Steering Committee so as to be broadly representative of the life of the community. In some cases, it may be that coalitions have already been formed around such issues as jobs, schools or housing. These existing groups may wish to identify with and work with The Urban Coalition.

Where a general, as contrasted to a single issue, coalition is being formed, the first order of business for the organizing committee is to round out representative participation on a local Steering Committee. Secondly, the Steering Committee should develop a draft Statement of Principles, Goals, and Commitments which endorses the national Statement and broadens it to include major local concerns. In those cities where several single issue coalitions already exist, they may wish to jointly create a steering committee to work with the National Steering Committee.

*Draft a
Statement of
Principles
and
Commitments*

It is strongly recommended that, where new coalitions are being formed, the local organizing committee arrange for at least one staff person to work full time for the local coalition. It is likely that this staff person could be borrowed from the staff of one of the participating elements of the coalition. While the National Steering Committee is not able to offer any financial assistance to local organizing committees, it will provide other assistance in preparing and convening local coalition activities.

*Full time
person
recommended*

In addition, the Steering Committee has accepted an offer by the National Institute of Public Affairs to furnish, where desired, technical assistance to local organizing committees in programming of local convocations and subsequent seminars and workshops on urban affairs. The National Steering Committee will also provide speakers, where needed and requested, in any or all of the substantive areas under consideration by The Urban Coalition Task Forces mentioned earlier.

*Technical
assistance
by NIPAA*

With respect to newly-formed local coalitions, it is expected that the local structure will include a steering committee and task forces to deal with national urban legislation, expansion of private employment, housing, education and public information.

Finally, it is contemplated that the local coalitions will participate in and help shape the programs of The Urban Coalition through a Council of Urban Coalitions. Each city should plan to designate two representatives to serve on this national Council. At its first meeting to be held before the end of this year, the Council will elect two representatives to serve on The National Steering Committee and will continue to advise The National Steering Committee on policies that are of national concern.

By definition, a coalition, whether it be single purpose or otherwise, is an association of constituencies for some agreed purposes and not at all necessarily a formally organized, regulated and structured entity. Local coalitions, whether single purpose or otherwise, may, therefore, be associations of leadership from already organized structures and sectors of communities. It is not necessary, although in some cases it may be desirable, for a local group to formally incorporate a local coalition. The national Urban Coalition has not chosen to incorporate. In the case of unincorporated local coalitions, funds may be channeled through a separate fiscal agent such as a cooperating organization.

At this point it is appropriate to mention in connection with those local groups that choose to incorporate, that careful attention should be given to weighing the advantages and disadvantages of seeking tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Perhaps one of the most important considerations in reaching a determination on whether to seek tax exempt status is the fact that organizations enjoying such status are not in a position to attempt to influence the decisions of legislative bodies. Given the potential importance of this fact for any organization attempting to deal in a comprehensive way with the range of urban problems, careful deliberation of this subject is in order on the local level before a decision is taken with respect to tax status. Members of the steering committees of such tax exempt organizations may nonetheless make appeals for legislation if they are acting as individuals.

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