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## **Cities And Towns Keep America Running**

(NAPSA)—Hometown America is where most of us live, work and play. But how often do any of us stop and think about the services provided by our cities and towns? We usually remember the police who patrol our streets and the fire personnel who keep us safe. But what about the potholes filled every day and the traffic lights repaired so our commutes are smoother; the many tons of garbage and recyclables picked up every week; the clean water that flows into our homes?

The hard work of 3.5 million municipal employees helps make our communities more livable. They are backed up by the efforts of thousands of local elected leaders who are usually on the job 24/7, responding to their constituents not only in town halls but also in their grocery stores, churches or theaters.

"At the city level, we don't do anything fancy; we build the side-walks; we install the streetlights; we administer the parks and recreation; we ensure the public's safety; we treat the wastewater; we provide the basic services," said National League of Cities (NLC) President and Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson. "Good municipal government is what ensures a better quality of life for our communities."

With 218 million Americansthat's seven out of 10 people—living in cities and towns, it would be hard to imagine what life would be like without adequate city services. That's why cities and towns are lobbying hard through the National League of Cities in Washington, D.C., to stop funding cuts to critical programs that are essential to their ability to provide adequate, affordable housing, good transportation and a safe environment, while increasing community development and guarding the public safety for citizens.

Unlike the federal government, the budgets of cities and towns must be balanced, so the costs for the services they provide must equal the revenues that cities collect from local taxes, fees and other sources. In 2006, two of three city finance directors said they were better able to meet financial needs than in previous years, but they also expressed concern about the future, according to a recent NLC survey.

As the federal portion of city revenues continues to shrink, from 15 percent of local budgets in 1977 to only 5 percent in 1997, cities and towns have been scrambling to make up the difference and find additional revenues. In many cases, cities face the challenge of doing more with less or cutting services. At the same time Washington is considering reducing federal money available to cities, expectations for critical city services have continued to rise.

The work cities do is often overlooked. For example, trash collection is a major service provided either directly by municipal employees or indirectly through private contractors. Sanitation workers collect 246 MILLION tons of garbage every year. And next time you get into the family car, consider this: Millions of tons of asphalt are used every year to fill potholes in the United States. During the New York City 2006 Pothole Blitz, 30 city transportation crews filled 1,200 potholes with 90 tons of asphalt EACH DAY.

Cities and towns not only provide jobs in public service, they also support work done in the private sector by plumbers, electricians, construction workers and other industries that rely on strong and healthy economies. In fact, cities buy 7 percent of all the goods and services in the country.

To learn more about cities and what they do to strengthen our communities, go to www.nlc.org.