



**THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
CIVILITY ACCORD
January 19, 2011**

On the morning of January 8, 2011, gunshots fired in one of our nation's great cities reverberated through all of America. A federal judge and a nine-year-old girl were among the six people killed that day in Tucson, and Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, the target of the shooting rampage, was among the 14 more who were wounded. The pain inflicted on them, their families, and the entire Tucson community is shared by people across our nation.

Regardless of what the motives behind the tragedy in Tucson might have been, it occurred in an atmosphere in which public discourse is often confrontational and lacking in civility. We should use this event as a point of departure, to recommit ourselves to building a more civil society in which each person is respected and public and political discourse are aimed at the betterment of our nation and its people and not the destruction of those with whom we disagree. As President Barack Obama said in the January 12 memorial service, "only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to our challenges as a nation."

We believe that because mayors are the elected leaders closest to the people, restoration of civility must begin with us. We are in a unique position to have a positive impact on behavior – individual and collective – and to lead by example. While the tragedy in Tucson is the impetus for this Accord, it represents a commitment that must live on in every mayor in our nation from this day forward.

Through The U.S. Conference of Mayors, we, the mayors of America's cities, in order to restore civility to our communities and through them to our nation, pledge our commitment to the following principles for civility:

- Respect the right of all Americans to hold different opinions;
- Avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, de-legitimize, or question the patriotism of those whose opinions are different from ours;
- Strive to understand differing perspectives;
- Choose words carefully;
- Speak truthfully without accusation, and avoid distortion;
- Speak out against violence, prejudice, and incivility in all of their forms, whenever and wherever they occur.

We further pledge to exhibit and encourage the kinds of personal qualities that are emblematic of a civil society: gratitude, humility, openness, passion for service to others, propriety, kindness, caring, faith, sense of duty, and a commitment to doing what is right.

The immediate need is to help our citizens through this difficult period. Our long term responsibility is to work with them to build that civil society.