

**Testimony of Mayor Byron W. Brown Before the United States House of Representatives
Committee On Homeland Security
Buffalo, NEW YORK
July 14, 2006**

Chairman King, I'd like to welcome you to Buffalo and thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk to you about homeland security issues, the impact of announced cuts in 2006 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding to our region and the City of Buffalo's pivotal position as a major international gateway to the United States.

I would also like to acknowledge a colleague of yours and a gentleman who has served our community with great distinction in both the New York State Legislature and the House of Representatives, Congressman Tom Reynolds.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Reynolds has always kept the interests and needs of the residents of Western New York foremost in his highly effective activities formerly in Albany and now in Washington.

The City of Buffalo, and, in fact, the entire Niagara River corridor stretching between lakes Erie and Ontario, is one of most important international corridors in the United States.

Linked by five international bridges to Canada, our nation's largest trading partner, the border between our two countries is vital link for commerce, trade, cultural activities, and tourism. Because of the important nature of the border in what the Department of Homeland Security identifies as the Buffalo Urban Area, there exist many potential targets for terrorist action.

It was, therefore, very troubling to learn recently that the Department of Homeland Security had decreased the Buffalo Urban Area's 2006 UASI funding by 50 percent from the previous year (2006 -- \$3.7 million; 2005 -- \$7.2 million). In fact, our region's funding has decreased annually since 2003, when we had received \$10.3 million in UASI funding.

As a result of this funding cut from the Department of Homeland Security, I joined my elected colleagues from the region, Erie County Executive Joel Giambra and Niagara County Legislature Chairman William Ross, in corresponding to Secretary Michael Chertoff to express our deep concern over the proposed cuts in UASI funding to our region.

For the record, I will now share key portions of that correspondence, which summarize precisely what our region's challenges are in relation to international terrorism and why the Homeland Security UASI cuts make no sense.

It is my belief, shared by my elected colleagues in this region, that the risk factors present within the Buffalo Urban Area leave our region vulnerable to terrorist attacks that would result in extreme and catastrophic consequences. The outcome of an attack on the assets within the Buffalo Urban

Area would not only impact the local region, but would have significant consequences at the national and international levels as well. In removing the Buffalo Urban Area from the list of highest threat areas, the Department of Homeland Security has eliminated New York State's second most populated area from full participation in the FY 2006 UASI and jeopardized the ability of the members of the Buffalo Urban Area to complete much needed initiatives to increase safety and security within the region.

The risk factors detailed below support our argument that the Buffalo Urban Area should be restored to the national list of high threat urban areas for the FY 2007 UASI:

International Border and Bridges. The Buffalo Urban Area (Erie and Niagara Counties) shares approximately 120 miles along the US-Canadian international border. Thirty miles of the international border within Niagara County is open Shoreline along Lake Ontario. Five international bridges are located within the Buffalo Urban Area: The Peace Bridge, Lewiston Bridge, International Rail Bridge and the Whirlpool Bridge. The Peace Bridge, Rainbow Bridge and Lewiston Bridge are among the Country's most active border crossings. The Peace Bridge is the second most traveled bridge between Canada and the United States with more than 7 million vehicles crossing in 2005. It is the heaviest traveled border crossing in the state. In practical terms, approximately 7,000 commercial vehicles use the international bridges within the Buffalo Urban Area daily. This equates to over \$300 million dollars worth of goods being carried over the International Rail Bridge. In the event of a terrorist attack on any of these crossings, the result would be a 'hardening' of every international crossing, and a geometric escalation of the economic impact across the northern hemisphere.

Energy and Utilities. Major energy production facilities including hydro-electric energy production, energy transmission and distribution systems, high pressure gas lines and publicly and privately owned information systems exist within the Buffalo Urban Area. Niagara County is home to the Niagara Power Project, the biggest electricity producer in New York State, generating 2.4 million kilowatts of power. The Niagara Power Project is located just 4.5 miles downstream from Niagara Falls and consists of two main facilities: the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant, with 13 turbines and the Lewiston Pump-Generating Plan, with 12 pump turbines. The economic impact of an attack on this asset, as evidenced by the two-day, \$6 billion dollar impact of the 2003 Northeast Blackout, would have catastrophic consequences to the economy of not only the Buffalo Urban Area, but to Canada and the northeastern region of the United States as well. As an added consequence, the electricity from the Niagara Power Project is linked to more than 400,000 jobs statewide.

Industrial Facilities and Hazardous Materials. Many chemical facilities and industrial plants now operate within the Buffalo Urban Area and are vulnerable to accidental or intentional incidents that could cause economic harm and loss of life through out the region. The US Environmental Protection Agency has identified 56 facilities in Erie and Niagara Counties that must comply with Section 112(r) of the federal Clean Air Act. These 56 facilities have extremely hazardous materials stored onsite that have the potential to cause death and injury off-site.

Corporate citizens located in the Buffalo Urban Area include General Motors, Delphi Thermal, Dunlop, Praxair, American Axle, DuPont, Coca-Cola, FMC and 3M. In

addition, the Buffalo Urban Area is home to several defense contractors. An attack at any of these facilities would have significant impact not only on the economy, but on our collective ability to carry out our mission for national security.

Major Transportation Hub. In addition to its status as a major international border crossing, the Buffalo Urban Area continues to be Western New York's major transportation hub. The Buffalo Urban Area hosts the Port of Buffalo, which services Great Lake traffic and the International Rail Bridge that is the gateway for commercial, international rail traffic between Canada and the United States. Much of the hazardous materials produced by the many industrial and chemical facilities described above are transported by rail or truck carriers through the densely populated Buffalo and Niagara falls areas. The Buffalo Urban Area is also home to the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). NFTA provides transportation services to 24.5 million passengers annually and serves 1575 sq. miles in the Buffalo Urban Area. Outside of New York City, the NFTA is the largest provider of public transportation in this State.

Residential Population Centers and International Tourist Attractions. The combined population for the Niagara Frontier is more than 1.15 million persons, based on 2000 US census date, including 292,648 in the City of Buffalo. Erie County has a land area of 1,044 square miles and a resident population of 930,703 people.

Tourists from across the state, the Nation and from abroad continue to visit this region, especially Niagara Falls, one of the seven scenic wonders of the world. The area is also home to two professional sports teams - the National Football League's Buffalo Bills and the Buffalo Sabres of the National Hockey League. The recently opened Seneca-Niagara Casino is also a major attraction with over 600 rooms for overnight guests.

As identified above, a high number of critical transportation assets, industrial and chemical facilities, major tourist attractions, and other infrastructure including a federal air reserve base are located in the region and are vital to our national security, public health, economy and public confidence. A terrorist act targeting any one of these assets, would precipitate significant consequence on the lives, safety and economy of populations within the Buffalo Urban Area and across the entire nation. Known terrorist suspects have been identified within the Buffalo Urban Area. The arrest by federal authorities in 2002 of six members of suspected al-Qaida cell - known as the Lackawanna 6 - occurred in Lackawanna, Erie County. They eventually pleaded guilty to providing material support to al-Qaida.

I believe that these facts and the related consequences more than justify the continued inclusion of the Buffalo Urban Area on the list of UASI eligible candidates. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the UASI and other programs, which have provided us with the financial and technical resources necessary to enhance homeland security in our region. I am committed to continuing to work together with my regional colleagues as members of the Buffalo Urban Area Working Group to maximize the resources available within our region to create a safe environment for our residents and to insure our continued protection of assets which the loss of would have an substantial impact across North America.

I urge the Committee to help us restore the Buffalo Urban Area to its justified place on the list of eligible UASI candidates so that we may build on the security successes we have achieved and can move forward with new innovations for the improvement of homeland security in our region. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you at your earliest convenience and look forward to working with you to maintain the safety and security of our region.

In closing, I also urge the Chairman and the members of the Committee on Homeland Security to properly assess the negative impact of the proposed Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. As an active member of the Bi-National Mayors' Coalition, an organization comprised of Mayors from Western New York and Southern Ontario, I share the concern of my fellow mayors with the proposed identification system that has emerged through WHTI.

It is our opinion, shared by many other concerned border communities and organizations, that any new identification requirements should use existing and accepted forms of identification with technological enhancements that can ensure new security requirements can be met.

The potential requirement of new Department of Homeland Security identification cards simply doesn't make sense, when existing passports, drivers licenses, Nexus cards and other forms of identification already work. In the Buffalo Urban Area we have an extremely strong and positive relationship with Canada. This relationship is a critical part of the fabric of our community.

The impact of this new identification system will be extremely damaging to tourism and commerce throughout our region – I oppose it. I understand that a subcommittee of the Committee on Homeland Security is holding hearings on the border primarily in Southwestern States. I recommend that hearings also be held in Northern Border States and the Buffalo Urban Area would be a great place to hold one.

Again, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the residents of the City of Buffalo, I thank you for the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on these critically important issues that affect the City of Buffalo, the Buffalo Urban Area, and the United States.

Thank you.