

Cities on a Hill

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Announcing Citiesonahill.org, a New Website on American Cities

This fall, the Manhattan Institute's Center for Civic Innovation (CCI) launched a website on urban governance. Citiesonahill.org features Fred Siegel's blog, which provides market-friendly policy solutions for urban governance, highlights trend lines between cities, and creates dialogue between city leaders and public policy experts.

Citiesonahill.org begins with the premise that cities should maintain and pursue the successful policies that the reform mayors of the 1990s pioneered. These mayors—Rudolph Giuliani, Richard Daley, Stephen Goldsmith, among others—stopped turning to Washington for solutions to their problems and instead sought to attract business and working families by reducing crime, welfare, taxes and regulations.

Mr. Siegel, editor-in-chief of the site and one of the original editors of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, was a major

intellectual force in the revitalization of declining American cities in the 1990s. As a senior advisor during Rudolph Giuliani's 1993 mayoral campaign, he wrote one of Mr. Giuliani's path-breaking speeches on quality of life. He is author of *The Prince of the City: Giuliani, New York and the Genius of American Life* (Encounter Books 2005) and *The Future Once Happened Here: New York, D.C., L.A. and the Fate of America's Big Cities* (Encounter Books 1997). Mr. Siegel is a professor of history at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City, where he has taught for over twenty years.

On the issue of where America's cities will be and should be 10 years from now, the question is: Can the present mood of optimism be used to generate a new urban vision, or was the drop in crime, and the urban boomlet it helped generate, just
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MOVING MEN INTO THE MAINSTREAM: NEXT STEPS IN URBAN REFORM

CCI and the Manhattan Institute's Center for Race and Ethnicity co-hosted a conference to address the problems faced by inner-city Black men, particularly ex-offenders. The June conference, "Moving Men into the Mainstream: The Next Steps in Urban Reform," will be a catalyst for CCI's future work on the issue of prisoner reentry. The conference considered both the general social and economic problems faced by minority-group males—especially African-Americans—and the special problems of ex-offenders.

Despite the success of welfare reform, a growing body of research shows that young Black men are not experiencing similar economic gains. Approximately one in three American Black men will be incarcerated. Of those incarcerated, two out of three will be reincarcerated within three years after release.

The "Moving Men" conference explored the question of whether the lessons that policymakers can draw from welfare reform might be profitably applied to the problem of marginalized males.

John McWhorter, Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow and author of *Winning the Race*, moderated the opening panel, which included four leading
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John McWhorter introduces panel to audience



MOVING MEN INTO THE MAINSTREAM *continued from page 1*

social scientists: Larry Mead of New York University; Ron Mincy of Columbia University; Hillard Pouncy of Princeton University; and Abigail Thernstrom, Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow.

Professor Mincy discussed the legislative programs and non-profit initiatives targeted at disadvantaged youth. He argued that policymakers should rethink the way that they educate males. One particular type of school, he noted, has been successful with boys: career academies with school-to-work programs. Professor Pouncy followed by stressing the need to bring policymakers and the Black community together in a single discussion.

Professor Mead emphasized the need to connect individuals with the labor force. “The ultimate problem is not really [lack of] money,” he explained. “The real challenge will be changing the institution [of criminal justice] so that employment becomes part of its core mission – not merely a special program.”

The second panel, “From Recidivism to Redemption: Ending the Cycle of Incarceration,” moderated by *Chicago Tribune* columnist Clarence Page, featured some of the nation’s leading criminal justice experts and correctional officials. Jeremy Travis, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and former director of the National Institute of Justice, quantified the mass-incarceration and recidivism problems. “Over the past 30 years, we have more than quadrupled the per-capita rate of incarceration in this country,” Mr. Travis noted, while “we have about 650,000 people coming out of our state and federal prisons each year now, which is about 1,800 a day.”

Martin Horn, Commissioner of NYC Departments of Correction and Probation, and Chauncey Parker, director of the NY State Department of Criminal Justice, discussed the work they’ve been doing to reduce recidivism in New York City and State. “There is nothing inevitable about returning to prison, if we can make the transition, and bring people back to their families,” noted Mr. Parker. “If we can make that transition, it would be the smartest thing we can do in law enforcement.”

Many released prisoners lack the education and skills to make a smooth transition into their communities. Vicki Lopez Lukis, Vice-Chair of the Florida Ex-Offender Task Force and an ex-offender

herself, addressed some of the barriers to reentry experienced by ex-offenders when they are released. Former Philadelphia mayor W. Wilson Goode, current director of the Amachi Program, which seeks to end the cycle of incarceration in families by providing mentors to children of parents in prison, argued that “the best re-entry program is no entry at all.”

The final panel, “Putting Policy to the Test,” created a dialogue between practitioners currently working with ex-offenders. Howard Husock, Vice President of Programs at the Manhattan Institute, led the discussion. Panelists included Peter Cove, Founder of American Works, Fred Davie, President of Public/Private Ventures, Brent Orrell of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, and Mindy Tarlow, Executive Director of the Center for Employment Opportunities in New York. The panel concurred that it is critical to connect former prisoners with for-profit jobs as soon as possible after release.



The Center for Civic Innovation’s “Moving Men into the Mainstream” project will publish research on ex-offenders and reentry and issue policy recommendations from leading criminal justice and policy experts.

The “Moving Men into the Mainstream” series of Civic Bulletins, derived from transcripts of the conference, are available at www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cb_44-46.htm

Announcing [Citiesonahill.org](http://www.citiesonahill.org) *continued from page 1*

a spike in a graph whose long term trend continues downward?
— From a [Citiesonahill.org](http://www.citiesonahill.org) blog posting by Fred Siegel.

To bring local knowledge to bear on the issues that face a variety of American cities, the blog will feature postings and discussions between some of the nation’s leading urban scholars from different cities. The blog also provides daily links to articles about urban issues in North America and Europe. The editors invite informed readers and local voices to contribute, comment, and

enrich each other’s understandings of what is happening—and what should be happening—in our cities.

The Center for Civic Innovation continues to develop policy prescriptions and promote best practices through publications, forums, and conferences with notable urban policy experts and public officials. The website will highlight and discuss CCI’s latest programs.

Visit the site at www.citiesonahill.org

CI has released a new Civic Bulletin, adapted from a June forum featuring Mercedes Marquez, Manager of the Los Angeles Housing Department. The Department's Systematic Code Enforcement Program (SCEP) was the recipient of the 2005 Fannie Mae Foundation Innovations in American Government Award in Affordable Housing. The award is a joint effort between the Fannie Mae Foundation and the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance at Harvard University.

While New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development struggles to respond to hundreds of thousands of violations, Los Angeles is the only city in the U.S. that proactively inspects every housing unit. The city has made the preservation of existing rental housing primary to its efforts.

Since the program's creation in 1998, Los Angeles' SCEP has overseen more than 1.5 million habitability violations and has gained, administratively, 99 percent code compliance. Both tenants and landlords organizations are pleased with the program's impact on their neighborhoods. It has led to more than \$1.3 billion in reinvestment in the city's housing stock by owners and landlords, Ms. Marquez reports.

Ms. Marquez was joined by Brad Lander, Director of the Pratt Center for Community Development, to discuss strategies employed by Los Angeles and New York City in preserving affordable rental housing units.

Access this bulletin at www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cb_47.htm

FLORIDA'S TEST-BASED PROMOTION LEADS TO READING GAINS



Florida students who repeated a grade made significant reading gains relative to those who advanced to the next grade in spite of failing a state test, according to a new Civic Report by Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Jay P. Greene and Senior Research Associate Marcus A. Winters. Their study, *Getting Farther Ahead by Staying Behind: A Second-Year Evaluation of Florida's Policy to End Social Promotion*,

evaluates Florida's state-wide test-based promotion policy on student achievement two years after initial retention. Dr. Greene and Mr. Winters find that while socially promoted students fall farther behind over time, retained students—those asked to repeat a grade—are able to catch up on skills they are lacking.

Some educators oppose holding back students on the basis of a standardized test out of concern that doing so is socially disruptive. However, many education reformers—searching for ways to ensure that kids start off on the right track toward academic success—are moving toward the notion that students are better off grouped by academic proficiency than age, and are ending the practice of social promotion.

Under Florida's test-based retention policy that the state legislature mandated in 2002, third graders are required to reach a minimum threshold on the FCAT reading test or meet exemption criteria. The authors used two research strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. They compared the test-score gains students made in the first year of the requirement with the students' gains the year before the policy's implementation. They also compared the gains of students who were barely above the minimum test score with the gains of students who were just below the threshold.

Retained students experienced test-score gains of about one percentile point or less after one year, and between three and five

percentile points after two years. The authors note that these gains are somewhat smaller than effects observed from class-size reductions and voucher programs, but are larger than the measured effects of charter-school programs or increased per-pupil spending.

In addition to Florida, a number of other large school systems—including Texas, Chicago, and New York City—are curtailing social promotion with the requirement that students demonstrate mastery of basic skills on a standardized test before advancing to the next grade. In the new report, the authors address discrepancies in research findings on the effectiveness of test-based promotion policies in Florida

and Chicago. The authors conclude that differences between a 2004 evaluation of Chicago and their own evaluation of Florida are due to differences in details of the promotion programs, rather than differences in evaluation methods.

Dr. Greene presented the report's findings at a breakfast forum in New York City on September 13, 2006. New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, an "unalloyed supporter of charter schools," introduced Dr. Greene. Since 2004, Chancellor Klein has instituted a test-based retention policy for third, fifth and seventh graders in New York City public schools. Students who do not meet the required test-score threshold on standardized tests have the opportunity to earn promotion by enrolling in the school system's Summer Success Academy and retaking required tests. Since the promotion policy's implementation, an increasing number of third, fifth, and seventh-grade students are meeting academic standards and earning promotion to the next grade, according to the Department of Education.

Access this report at www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_49.htm



Chancellor Joel Klein

PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS CEO PAUL VALLAS RECEIVES URBAN INNOVATOR AWARD

by Third Eye Productions, Inc.



Paul Vallas and Stephen Goldsmith

On September 21, CCI hosted a luncheon at the Four Seasons in Philadelphia to celebrate the accomplishments of Paul Vallas, Chief Executive of the Philadelphia School District, and honor him with the center's Urban Innovator Award. Mr. Vallas is the first education official to receive the award, which is given annually to an urban leader for improving the quality of life in their city.

Stephen Goldsmith, founding chairman of CCI, introduced Mr. Vallas and presented him with the award.

Mr. Vallas served as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools from 1995 to 2001 and was appointed CEO of the Philadelphia School District in 2002. In Philadelphia, Mr. Vallas has dramatically increased school choice, raised expectations and academic standards, and improved accountability in a once financially unstable, and largely ineffective, district.

"The city of Philadelphia has more school choice than any major urban school district in the country," Mr. Vallas said. "One-third of the children educated in our schools are educated in nontraditional schools, charter schools, privately-managed schools, or independent schools (...) and they are all performing splendidly."

Among the many other significant transformations in the Philadelphia school district, Vallas noted that it had:

- Created a district-wide early childhood education program.
- Standardized curriculum and instructional manuals.
- Restored Advanced Placement and Honors programs to most schools.
- Developed "accelerated academies" in elementary schools.
- Doubled the number of high schools in the city in just five years.

The Philadelphia school district's smaller high schools are outperforming larger ones. "We've had small schools, but now we have small schools with high standards," he said. "And wherever you live in Philadelphia," he added, "you have multiple high school choices."

While in Chicago, Mr. Vallas introduced test-based retention policies, eliminated a projected four-year budget shortfall of \$1.3 billion, oversaw the construction and renovation of hundreds of school buildings, and established the largest after-school and summer reading programs in the country.

Past award recipients include New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, Miami mayor Manuel Diaz, Washington, D.C. mayor Anthony Williams, Baltimore mayor Martin O'Malley, former Oakland mayor Jerry Brown, former St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman, and Chicago mayor Richard Daley.

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