



# Conference/Seminar Summary

City of Watsonville  
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To: The Honorable Mayor & City Council  
Council Meeting Date: 03/19/2024

City Council Member: \_\_\_\_\_  
Conference/Seminar: NLC City Congressional City Conference  
Location: Washington, D.C  
Dates of Travel: 03/09/24- 03/13/2024

Please provide a brief report on the conference, seminar, or meeting you attended.

I attended the NLC City Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C, March 9th through March 13, 2024. Along with the general sessions, I attended a Deep Dive Session on Economic Development. I attended this session because the Council has identified Economic Development as our current top priority for the city. This deep dive session had a panel of all women leaders, in honor of International Women’s Day. The leaders were from various different industries and sectors and all spoke about ways municipalities can think outside the box and holistically work towards Economic Development in their respective Municipalities. As Watsonville does have its own airport, we were encouraged to utilize this asset to the best of our ability, for example, an aviation industry job skills training program. Brittany Stich emphasized the importance of equitable pathways and breaking down silos in different sectors. Investment in apprentice programs and initiatives can significantly enhance opportunities for individuals, particularly those underemployed or discouraged from the labor force. Adriana Rocha Garcia stressed the need for proactive rather than reactive approaches to job creation. By focusing on infrastructure jobs that don't require college degrees but offer competitive wages and benefits, employers can attract individuals back into the workforce, addressing barriers like transportation and licensing requirements. Catherine McConnell highlighted the significance of building pathways to jobs earlier, even during middle and high school. Strategies such as dual enrollment, industry credentials, and work-based learning can equip individuals with the skills needed for jobs, complemented by adult education programs and career navigation support. Tess Mason Elder proposed utilizing programs like Americorps as a pipeline to the workforce, offering skills training, credentials, and

educational opportunities through Pell grants. This approach can bridge the gap for individuals seeking entry into the workforce. Colleen Rathgeb emphasized the critical role of affordable and accessible childcare in supporting airport workers, particularly early childhood education (ECE) workers. Initiatives to lower childcare costs, streamline enrollment processes, and increase pay for childcare providers can significantly benefit employees. Finally, the report underscores the importance of city initiatives in supporting workforce development, including zoning policies, collaboration between programs, and union support. By addressing childcare accessibility, breaking down silos, and fostering collaboration, cities can create a conducive environment for workforce growth. Enhancing workforce development requires a multi-faceted approach, encompassing equitable pathways, proactive strategies, early education initiatives, childcare support, and city-level collaboration. By implementing these strategies, our city can foster a skilled and diverse workforce poised for success. Along with Councilmembers Montesino and Dutra, as well as City Manager Mendez and Assistant City Manager Vides, we met with Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and later also met with staff from Senator Alex Padilla's office. In these meetings, we discussed and highlighted the importance of three projects that are underway in Watsonville: the Downtown Revitalization through Infrastructure, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the new Nature Center. Assistant Manager Vides, Councilmember Montesino, and myself were also fortunate to visit the National Museum of American History to view the exhibit on the importance of the railway and agriculture in Watsonville in the early 19th century.

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*At the conclusion of the event, a brief report on the conference or seminar attended at the expense of the City must be presented to the City Council at the next regularly scheduled City Council Meeting.*

*Government Code Section 53234*

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