



Nevada Association of Counties
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www.nvnaco.org

Nevada Association of Counties (NACO) Federal Priorities

Health & Human Services

Protect the Federal State Local Partnership for Medicaid: NACO supports maintaining the federal-state-local structure for financing and delivering Medicaid services while maximizing or enhancing flexibility to support local systems of care. Counties are concerned about measures that would further shift Medicaid costs to counties, including proposals to institute block grants or per capita caps. Counties' ability to raise revenue is already restricted by the State and these proposals would increase the amount of uncompensated care provided by counties and reduce counties' ability to provide for the health of our residents. Counties have made the most of Medicaid's flexibility and have constructed health systems that serve a disproportionate share of low income populations, including the homeless, and those cycling in and out of county jails. Medicaid funding also impacts county hospitals - without sustained funding, county hospitals would be forced to shutter their doors. Counties do support efforts to improve the efficiency, flexibility and effectiveness of policies and operations.

Protect Funding for Key Behavioral Health Programs: NACO supports measures that maintain funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) block grants, ease the Institute of Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion, expand access to health information technology (HIT), and to develop and expand the behavioral health workforce.



Public Safety

Mental Health and Jails: County jails are not the appropriate place to treat individuals with mental illness, unfortunately, nationally, 64% of jail inmates in the United States have a behavioral health issue. In Nevada, our county jails are one of the largest providers of behavioral health services in the State. NACO supports measures that enhance the ability of counties to prevent and treat mental illness and substance use disorders, both in the community and within the context of the criminal justice system. NACO also supports programs and legislation that divert non-violent individuals struggling with mental illness and/or substance use disorders from jails and into treatment programs while protecting overall public safety. NACO also supports the extension of Medicaid to individuals detained in county jails pending disposition of charges and the suspension, instead of termination, of benefits during the incarceration period. Because States refuse to assume the federal share of providing Medicaid services to eligible persons in custody in county jails, benefits and eligibility can be terminated; consequently, the entire cost of medical care for all arrested and detained individuals falls to the counties.

Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCPC):

(Formerly known as The Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act) This program supports local efforts to decrease mental illness in jails through a broad range of activities, including: jail diversion programs, mental health courts, in-jail treatments and transitional services. JMHCPC should be fully funded in the annual appropriations process, and Congress should reauthorize the program.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Byrne JAG: This grant program is a critical part of the federal government's support for local law enforcement programs and initiatives. Byrne JAG funds can be used for local criminal justice programs related to prosecution and courts; prevention and education; corrections and community corrections; drug treatment and enforcement; planning, evaluation, and technology improvement; and crime victim and witness programs (other than compensation). Full funding for the program should be a priority in annual appropriations.



Public Lands & Natural Resources

Public Land Management: As Nevada's Congressional Delegation is aware, Nevada has the largest percentage of federal lands (87%) of any state, and some of our counties (Nye, Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln and White Pine) have 90 to 98 percent of their total county acreage administered by the federal government. As a result, Nevada's counties find their local economies, fiscal condition, and quality of life influenced considerably by federal land management decisions. For example, public access for recreation is critically important; however, the actual economic benefits from recreation on public lands to rural economies and county revenues are small to none, while the additional number of visitors increases the demand for county services. For many Nevada communities, resource-based industries that are tied to public lands are their lifeblood. And in all counties staying apprised of and involved in federal land management planning and conservation efforts is critical, as federal agency decisions are inextricably tied to counties' ability to effectively plan for the future and provide mandated services. Counties provide road maintenance, emergency response, law enforcement and other services on public lands and to public lands users, and also manage assets that require federal permits, leases, or easements. For all these reasons meaningful engagement with counties is crucial and NACO supports the following: efforts to increase federal land managers' engagement with county governments; appropriate revenue sharing; and the transfer of some federal land to states, at the state's request and in consultation with the counties. Also, NACO opposes the designation of national monuments made without consulting the county government in which the monument is located or without the funding necessary to provide for those who wish to visit.

Continued Full Funding of PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes): The PILT program provides payments to counties and other local governments to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of substantial federal land acreage within their jurisdictions. PILT payments are necessary to support essential local government services (mandated by law) such as, emergency services, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement and health care. Because local governments are unable to tax the property values or products derived from federal lands, Nevada's rural counties are increasingly relying on PILT to balance their budgets and provide essential services. Without predictable mandatory funding, PILT will remain a discretionary program subject to the annual appropriations process. Thanks to the work of Nevada's federal delegation, PILT was fully funded for \$465 million in FY 17. Counties ask members of Congress to support long-term predictable full funding for PILT in FY 2018 and beyond.

Funding Wildfire Response: NACO supports federal reforms to end the practice of "fire borrowing" and improve forest management and hazardous fuels management on federal lands. Fire borrowing occurs when the Forest Service takes funds away from forest health, fire prevention, and other management activities to help pay the costs to fight current



wildfires. As catastrophic wildfires increase, agencies are using up funds intended for forest management to fight wildfires, as opposed to emergency funds similar to what the Federal Emergency Management Agency is allowed to use for natural disasters that exceed their annual budget. NACO would support legislation providing emergency funding to fight wildfires on public land so that the Forest Service can afford to continue critical forest management activities.

Military Withdrawals: The National Defense Authorization Act will be introduced to Congress for renewal in 2021. The boundaries for both the Air Force's Nellis Test and Training Range and the Navy's Fallon Range Training Complex Naval Station in Nevada are subject to reauthorization, and both bases will be asking for Congress's permission to withdraw an additional 604,789 acres of land for Fallon and 220,000 acres for Nellis – an expansion of their boundaries in Nevada. Counties are currently evaluating the impacts to their communities from the proposed withdrawals and NACO asks that our congressional delegation support counties during this process and consider their needs and requests.

Wild Horses and Burros: By large margin, Nevada has the largest population of wild horses and burros on public lands of any State, and wild horses and burros have long been an integral part of the landscape and heritage of Nevada. Unfortunately, wild horse and burro populations have far exceeded Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) for some time; horse populations have a growth rate of 15 to 20 percent a year, meaning the herds double in size about every four years. The resulting overpopulation has created serious environmental concerns for horses, wildlife, and the ecology of Nevada's rangelands. This situation also has both direct and indirect impacts on counties. NACO urges our congressional delegation to assure that the Department of Interior complies with the WFRWH&BA so that Nevada's rangelands are managed in a thriving ecological balance.

Endangered Species Act and Sage-Grouse: Stakeholders across Nevada have engaged in significant collaborative conservation efforts and species management planning to prevent a potential listing decision for Bi-state and Greater Sage-grouse populations under the Endangered Species Act. The Department of the Interior is currently revising the Greater Sage Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments, and counties hope this revision considers the needs of the species as well as the planning needs of the State of Nevada and Nevada's counties. At the same time, the Fish and Wildlife Service will look at all ongoing efforts to save the species when it reviews the status in the future. Federal funding for local collaborative conservation efforts is imperative to achieve locally-driven solutions, reduce local impacts and improve the outlook of the species.

Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs): In Nevada, there are approximately 2,552,000 acres that were designated over 30 years ago as areas that need to be studied to determine whether they contain wilderness characteristics. NACO supports Congressional language



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that would require that a decision be made regarding the management of these acres and that any acres not selected as wilderness be released to their previous status.



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County Financing and Funding

County Authority to Collect Existing Sales Tax from Online Retailers: NACO supports legislation to permit the collection of existing sales and use taxes from remote sellers. The issue of collecting remote sales taxes has taken on greater significance in recent years due to the Internet's growth as a growing retail marketplace currently valued at \$200 billion dollars. As a result, state and local governments have lost billions in uncollected sales taxes and Main Street businesses find themselves at a large competitive disadvantage to online merchants. Including in Nevada, where based on 2012 numbers, these tax revenue losses approached \$400 million dollars statewide. This disadvantage is amplified because online merchants and their customers use and benefit from local infrastructure and services without contributing to their provision.

Unfunded Mandates and Preservation of County Revenues: NACO opposes any new unfunded mandates and federal initiatives that fail to protect county revenues. In addition, NACO opposes efforts by any industry seeking to create its own special immunity from state and local taxation. NACO supports efforts that preserve and enable state and local governments to exercise their tax authority.

Support Funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program: NACO strongly supports the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program established in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The CDBG program provides increased opportunities for elected county officials to plan, implement, and evaluate local community development and housing assistance programs. For the potential of the CDBG program to be fully realized, it must be fully funded and properly administered. NACO urges Congress, HUD and the Office of Management and Budget to comprehensively review the adequacy of present and future program levels, so that all counties, not just those that receive a direct entitlement, can participate in this important program area.



Transportation & Infrastructure

Long-term Transportation Funding and Financing: Nevada's counties welcome the recent renewed focus on infrastructure. We believe a strong federal-state-local partnership will be critical to delivering a bipartisan infrastructure package that invests in every community. Counties know firsthand the infrastructure needs of our communities, including roads, bridges, airports, transit, water and sewer systems, public facilities, energy, broadband and our telecommunications network. Despite strict constraints on counties' ability to generate revenue and an ever-growing list of federal and state unfunded mandates, counties invest significantly in infrastructure. In Nevada over 60% of the roads are county maintained and counties are struggling to keep up with this responsibility. The long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund is critical to meeting these needs. Nevada's counties also welcome a renewed focus on streamlining the federal review process to help deliver urgently needed projects. Additionally, we must find the correct balance between federal, state and local investments and private sector partnerships. NACO supports continuing to urge the Administration and Congress to ensure that any infrastructure package includes the following county priorities: allocating more funding for locally owned infrastructure, a focus on local decision making, and prioritizing investments that provide for increased economic development, mobility and safety.

I-11: NACO supports funding for current and future phases of I-11, including into Northern Nevada. I-11 will provide a significant economic benefit to Southern Nevada as well as a significant potential benefit throughout Northwestern Nevada.

County Water/Wastewater: NACO supports the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) programs, the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF), and the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund, as supplements to, not a substitute for, federal grants programs. Grants and technical assistance should be made available to those small, rural, disadvantaged communities that are unable to meet their needs solely with loans.

Support Broadband Deployment and Adoption: NACO supports legislation and administrative policies that help counties attract broadband services regardless of population or technology used. This includes legislation that provides tax credits to telecommunications providers that develop broadband in rural and under-served communities and gives broadened eligibility and additional federal agency loan authority or extension of credit to telecommunications providers that deploy broadband in rural communities.