



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 have made the most of Medicaid's flexibility and have supported health systems that serve a disproportionate share of low-income populations, including the homeless, and those cycling in and out of county jails. Nevada counties are **opposed** to any measures that would further shift Medicaid costs to counties. In Nevada, counties already provide a significant amount of Nevada's non-federal Medicaid contribution, and as Nevada's Medicaid caseloads continue to grow, counties are concerned about any proposal that increases State or local responsibility for Medicaid funding. If Medicaid costs or costs for uncompensated care for indigent individuals were increased, counties in Nevada, who have limited ability to raise revenues, would be hard-pressed to meet new fiscal responsibilities. 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.

Promote Economic Mobility and Opportunity Across All Counties: NACO supports federal investments and policies that help advance and leverage both regional and local strategies that engage children, youth, adults and older adults in the development of a competitive and quality workforce. While national economic indicators are strong, many communities - defined both as geographic places and as certain demographics - lag the overall national performance. Currently, counties are confronting increased demand and caseloads for workforce skills training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, public hospital services (including county-run hospitals and clinics), child protective services and elder care. At the same time, county governments are increasingly burdened and restricted by mounting federal and state mandates, limitations and oversight. To meet these challenges, counties need a strong federal partner committed to achieving better outcomes through local decision-making, flexibility and accountability focused on improved outcomes for those local economies that are transitioning in light of our changing economic landscape.



Justice and Public Safety

Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP): NACO supports a federal solution to the policy that upon detention (*not conviction*) inmates are no longer eligible for Medicaid, Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or veterans' health benefits. NACO supports an update to this policy as counties address behavioral health and basic medical care in our jails. In March of 2019, the National Association of Counties, along with the National Sheriffs Association, convened a taskforce to look at impacts on recidivism and healthcare for our jailed population due to the MIEP. NACO urges Congress to remove the provision in the Social Security Act and make a differentiation between an incarcerated individual prior to conviction.

Mental Health and Jails: County jails are not the appropriate place to treat individuals with mental illness, unfortunately, 64% of jail inmates in the United States have a behavioral health issue. **In Nevada, our county jails are the largest provider of behavioral health services in the State.** NACO supports sensible measures that promote and advance the overall safety of the public and the communities we serve. Within this context, we also support new policies and approaches that would 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. Two critical federal programs that counties rely on to provide services to our incarcerated populations and reduce recidivism are the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHC) and the Second Chance Act.

Natural Disaster Recovery: The reform to the Natural Disaster Recovery Act of 2018 includes the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program. This would allow direct grants to counties, starting in 2020, and allow local governments the ability to use some of the funds for pre-disaster mitigation. Research performed by the National Institute of Building Sciences indicates that for every \$1 spent on pre-disaster mitigation \$6 are saved. NACO supports efforts to increase funding to this program, as well as making sure we align matching fund requirements to continue to make the implementation of this program work for all counties.



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 in the contiguous 48. Some of our counties (Nye, Esmeralda, Lander, Lincoln and White Pine) have 90 to 98 percent of their acreage administered by the federal government. As a result, Nevada's counties find their local economies, fiscal condition, and quality of life greatly influenced by federal land management decisions. For example, while public access for recreation is critically important, additional visitors increase the demand for county services while sometimes creating only minimal economic benefit for Nevada's rural counties. Also, for many Nevada communities, resource-based industries that are tied to public lands are their lifeblood. Therefore, staying apprised of and involved in federal land management planning and conservation efforts is critical. Counties provide road maintenance, emergency response, law enforcement and other mandated services on public lands and to public lands users. Counties also manage assets that require federal permits, leases, or easements. For all these reasons, meaningful engagement with counties is crucial. 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 when feasible, and at the state's request and in consultation with the counties.

Continued Full Funding of PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes): The PILT program provides payments to counties to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of substantial federal land acreage within their jurisdictions. Because local governments are unable to collect property taxes on federal lands, Nevada's rural counties are increasingly relying on PILT to balance their budgets and provide essential services, including those provided on public lands and to public lands users. NACO appreciates the delegations' support for fully funding for PILT and SRS in 2019, as well as support for Senate Bill 2108 which modifies the PILT funding formula for small counties to meet the unique needs for counties between 1,000 and 4,000 in population.

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 and Training Complex are subject to reauthorization through the Act and both bases will be asking for Congress's permission to withdraw approximately 600,000 additional acres of land for Fallon and 220,000 acres for Nellis. Regarding Fallon, we appreciate the engagement from our Congressional Delegation with NACO to address county issues on the Navy's upcoming Record of Decision (ROD). Counties believe there will be significant impacts from the proposed Fallon withdrawals on county infrastructure and local communities, and counties have provided extensive comments outlining concerns. Currently, the Fallon EIS does not include a plan for funding the mitigation that will be necessary to pay for impacts of the withdrawal, and counties continue to be concerned about impacts the land withdrawals will have on county



infrastructure, public access and PILT payments. NACO respectfully requests continued assistance from our Congressional Delegation as this process moves forward, to ensure that county needs are addressed.

Wild Horses and Burros: Nevada has by far the largest population of wild horses and burros on public lands of any State. Wild horses and burros (WHB's) have long been an icon of the landscape and heritage of Nevada. The Free-Roaming Wild Horses and Burros Act of 1971 requires the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to maintain populations at an agency-determined appropriate management level (AML). Unfortunately, wild horse and burro populations have far exceeded AMLs for some time. For example, in 2019, the BLM estimated the wild horse and burro population currently on Nevada's rangelands as 47,468, though it is believed to be significantly higher, yet the AML for Nevada is only 12,811. Overpopulation has created serious environmental concerns for wildlife, the ecology of Nevada's rangelands, and for the horses themselves. As a result, wild horses suffer death from starvation or dehydration as a result of resource scarcity. The \$21 million appropriated for WHB in the 2020 omnibus spending bill provides critical funding for this ever more urgent issue. NACO supports the "[Path Forward](#)" proposal, which outlines a strategy of adoption, relocation, and fertility control that is both humane and promotes ecological balance on Nevada's rangelands. NACO urges the Federal Government to immediately begin spending down the \$21 million appropriation to carry out the directives in the Path Forward plan.

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. NACO has been a cooperating agency in both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture's creation of Greater Sage-grouse Land Use Plan Amendments. NACO also provided comments and guidance to the Department of Interior regarding its Bi-State Sage-grouse ESA listing decision. NACO will continue to engage with Interior and USDA to advocate that respective agencies consider the needs of the species as well as the planning needs of the State of Nevada and Nevada's counties.

Waters of the United States (WOTUS): Any future definition of "navigable waters" should not overburden counties who own key public safety and water infrastructure and who are intergovernmental partners in implementing federal Clean Water Act regulations. Specifically, NACO supports a tiered approach which includes waters that are navigable-in-fact, those with an indistinguishable surface connection with navigable-in-fact water, and wetlands which directly abut navigable-in-fact waters or abut those that have indistinguishable surface connection with navigable-in-fact waters. A tiered approach will create a reasonable definition, and ensure that in Nevada, the definition is not so expansive that it extends to the entire Nevada landscape, including ephemeral streams and washes, flood zones, groundwater, and manmade conveyances and facilities.



Telecommunications

Boosting Broadband and Emerging Technologies: NACO supports the deployment and availability of emerging technologies, such as small cell 5G, to all areas of Nevada, to ensure equitable economic and educational opportunities for all. County officials must also fulfill our responsibilities as trustees of public property and as protectors of public safety and health during this deployment process. By preserving local authority, county governments can ensure that the public interest is being served by communications providers regardless of the delivery platform. Federal policymakers should also support local decision-making and accountability and oppose any actions that would preempt or limit the zoning and siting authority of local governments.

Additionally, accurate broadband connectivity data is essential to buildout critical broadband infrastructure in areas lacking access to high-speed internet. Unfortunately, connectivity data provided to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by internet service providers is often inaccurate and inflated – leaving many rural and other underserved areas overlooked and disconnected. NACO urges Congress and the FCC to improve the accuracy of the broadband coverage maps by creating a formal process by which crowd-sourced data can be used to create new or update existing FCC broadband coverage maps. Further, NACO supports legislation requiring the FCC to test and certify the accuracy of the crowd-sourced data. NACO also urges Congress and federal agencies to recognize counties as partners in extending the benefits of advanced telecommunications and broadband technology — including improvements to county emergency preparedness and public safety systems — to all Americans.

Cybersecurity: Counties continue to face increasing risk of cyber threats from multiple sources every day and we must ensure that citizens' personal information and critical infrastructure are adequately protected, recoverable and secured in the event of any potential breach. As Congress considers cybersecurity legislation, NACO supports ensuring that the needs of counties and local government are considered.



County Financing and Funding

Optimizing Intergovernmental Partnerships and Federalism: NACO is pleased with our partnership with our federal delegation and look to continued coordination on policies that benefit and impact Nevada's. NACO opposes unfunded mandates and federal initiatives that fail to protect county revenue. We support efforts that recognize and respect the unique roles and responsibilities of counties as essential partners in our nation's intergovernmental system of federal, state, local and tribal officials. County governments are tasked with implementing both state and federal policies as well as regulations at the local level and should be included in all stages of the governing process. NACO urges Congress to pass the Restore the Partnership Act ([H.R. 3883](#)) and the Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act ([H.R. 300](#)) to increase transparency, reduce regulatory burden, foster intergovernmental dialogue and unite all levels of government in supporting our unparalleled system of federalism.

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 is thankful for the increased appropriations, recently passed, for the CDBG program, as well as for the HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) Program, which is an important component in providing affordable housing in Nevada's communities.



Transportation

Long-term Transportation Funding and Financing: Nevada's Counties support efforts by the administration and Congress to increase our nation's infrastructure investments to help promote economic development, public safety and overall mobility. In Nevada, counties maintain over 65% of the roads in the State. Counties should be recognized as major owners of transportation infrastructure in any comprehensive package presented by the administration and Congress, including future surface transportation reauthorization legislation. Any federal infrastructure package should reflect county priorities, such as: allocating more federal seed capital and matching funds for locally owned infrastructure, increasing local decision-making authority and flexibility, and streamlining and shortening the federal permitting process while still requiring robust public participation and world-class environmental stewardship. Additionally, the long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund is critical as is the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funding. Finally, NACO also supports continued funding of the I-11 project, including the expansion into Northern Nevada.

Election Integrity & Funding

Administering our Nation's Elections: NACO supports federal policies that provide flexibility for local decision making and increased federal investments in the nation's elections system. As administrators and financers of our elections, counties work to ensure our elections are both fair and secure. Therefore, NACO supports a consistent, predictable and dedicated federal funding stream to assist counties with meeting the significant federal requirements already imposed on local governments administering elections. We also support efforts by Congress and the Administration to combat cybersecurity threats in a way that is inclusive of county election and technology officials. As Congress considers these changes, NACO urges federal lawmakers to protect local control over election administration and oppose mandates and specific requirements regarding equipment, procedures and personnel responsibilities.