July 25, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On February 3 our President and I wrote you and congressional leaders regarding our concerns as you and the U. S. Congress evaluated alternatives to control the Federal Government’s rising deficit. As we left our 2011 Annual conference last week, NACo incorporated the tenets adopted earlier this year as final policy into our American County Platform. They are the following:

- You cannot solve the budget deficit by only cutting domestic, non-military discretionary programs.
- Federal assistance to state and local governments will help mitigate further layoffs.
- Federal investment in state and local infrastructure produces private sector jobs.
- Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to counties, imposing unfunded mandates, or pre-empting county programs or taxing authority.

Those principles are relevant to the discussions on the debt ceiling today. County governments will suffer the brunt of the alternatives presented. Proposals to reduce domestic spending as the only answer to reducing our debt without seeking revenues is inexcusable. Non-Military, discretionary programs are only 12 percent, or approximately $480 billion, of the annual federal budget of $3.6 trillion. These cuts will not put a significant dent in the deficit. As the saying goes “You can’t get there from here.”

It is being reported that sometime today Speaker Boehner and Majority leader Reid are supposed to unveil their separate efforts in attempting to offer a deal to break the stalemate that has ensued to pass a debt ceiling compromise. Both proposals are expected to rely heavily on draconian reductions to domestic spending accounts with little or no consideration to increased government revenues. Reducing domestic spending by $1.0–$4.0 trillion as being reported will ensure that our citizens will not receive essential services over the next ten years. It seems that proposals on all sides have concluded that the easiest and less painful avenue is reducing assistance to state and local governments and the citizens we represent. Too much emphasis is being placed on reductions to domestic, discretionary spending programs that will affect the American people. Again, these cuts will not put a significant dent in the deficit and should not be counted on as the only answer in dealing with America’s debt situation.
Mr. President, county governments are partners with the states and the federal government in providing important programs and services to the American people. Counties will participate in addressing the challenges our nation is facing and expect the federal government and Congress to do the same without drastically hurting the people we all serve.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Naake
Executive Director