Large Urban County Caucus urges Congress to preserve Medicaid, support federal funding priorities for counties

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representatives from the nation’s largest metropolitan counties recently urged U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives to fully support federal funding and legislative priorities affecting urban counties and communities.

Thirteen elected county officials representing 11 counties from nine states – Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Texas – participated in the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) “fly-in” advocacy effort held May 3-5 in Washington, D.C. LUCC is a bipartisan coalition of elected and appointed county officials from across the nation representing about 130 million people.

The advocacy effort was led by LUCC Chair Ilene Lieberman, commissioner, Broward County, Fla. The week’s featured event was the Rally on Capitol Hill in support of preserving Medicaid from becoming a block grant program for the states.

“NACo opposes Medicaid cuts or changing it into a block grant for the states,” said LUCC Chair Ilene Lieberman, Commissioner, Broward County, Fla. “NACo also opposes capping entitlement programs. These proposals would simply shift Medicaid’s costs to counties.”


Said Sen. Rockefeller: “Medicaid is part of the fabric of our nation – and the people covered by Medicaid matter. Ill-conceived proposals to turn Medicaid into a block grant program would turn our backs on our most vulnerable populations, like families, seniors, the disabled, and public hospitals and clinics. Their needs don’t go away with spending cuts -- reducing the federal commitment to Medicaid just burdens the states who pick up the slack. We need to find smart ways to reduce the federal deficit and lower government spending without burdening ordinary families and local governments.”

Lieberman said LUCC members were also concerned about proposed cuts in other funding priority areas. “During these extended periods of high unemployment and tough economic times, now is not the time to cut federal programs that directly affect families and communities,” Lieberman said. “Despite some positive signs of economic growth, people are hurting. It’s during tough times such as these that more
Americans turn to their county government for assistance. All levels of government must find ways to meet the needs of our business, communities and families.

Federal funding priorities for counties include: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Community Services Block Grant program; Workforce Investment Act, Medicaid, and local justice/public safety programs.

Other legislative priorities include: repeal of the three percent withholding tax on county purchases, reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, and opposition to online travel companies (OTCs) efforts to legitimize their currently illegal and unethical business practice of withholding tax receipts from cities, counties and states collected from consumers when hotel rooms are booked through OTCs.

The fly-in effort also included White House briefings with key administration officials. On Thursday, Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.) visited NACo headquarters and addressed the LUCC members. The Congressman chairs the Congressional Urban Caucus and is a longtime supporter of LUCC and NACo.

“There’s no more important a partnership that we have in the Congress on urban issues than this caucus,” Rep. Fattah said.

He acknowledged the need to balance the federal budget, but said it should not come at the expense of programs that keep America’s urban communities strong—such as education, energy programs and community revitalization.

“We’d be cutting off our nose to spite our face,” he said. “We can’t be the world’s leading superpower on the cheap.”

More information on NACo and LUCC priority issues is available at www.naco.org.

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.