Economic recovery tops agenda for counties
1,400 officials to carry county message to Washington, D.C., March 3-7

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Jobs and the role of county governments in the economic recovery will be the primary focus for more than 1,400 elected and appointed county officials from around the country participating in the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) 2012 Legislative Conference, March 3-7, at the Washington Hilton.

During the five-day conference, county officials will hear from national leaders, consider policy resolutions on federal issues affecting local government, and meet with administration officials and members of Congress to deliver the county government message.

Confirmed featured guest speakers include Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Rep. Adrian Smith (R-Neb.), Transportation Secretary Ray H. LaHood, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, and political commentators Tucker Carlson and Eleanor Clift. In addition, Ambassador Ron Kirk, U.S. Trade Representative, will address the NACo International Economic Development Task Force.

Despite some hopeful signs of national economic recovery, NACo President Lenny Eliason said counties are continuing to struggle with their revenues and budgets.

“Counties are feeling the effects of cuts in federal assistance," said Eliason, Commissioner, Athens County, Ohio. “Combined with reduced state funding and lower local revenue, these cuts are forcing counties to reduce staff and struggle to fund essential social safety net programs, health care and public safety services, and maintain our aging transportation and infrastructure systems. During this conference, we will deliver the message to the Administration and Congress that county officials seek solutions that will protect vital county programs, effectively serve our common constituents, and promote job creation.”

Featured guest speakers will address conference attendees during the general sessions (International Ballroom/Concourse Level):

Opening General Session
1:30–3:30 p.m., Monday, March 5
• Rep. Adrian Smith (approx. 1:45-2:05 p.m.)
• Tucker Carlson and Eleanor Clift (approx. 2:30 p.m.)

Tuesday General Session
8:30–10:15 a.m., Tuesday, March 6
• Sen. Dick Durbin (approx. 8:30 a.m.)
• Sen. Mike Enzi (approx. 8:45 a.m.)
• Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood (approx. 9:05 a.m.)
• Rep. Nancy Pelosi (approx. 9:30 a.m.)
On Saturday March 3, from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., the NACo Technology Summit will take place. The theme of the summit is “The Application of Mobile, Location-Based and Cloud-Based Technologies to Better Engage Your Citizens and Employees.” A highlight will be the 9 a.m. panel, that will discuss how Orange County, Fla. and Blue Earth County, Minn. use mobile apps to save counties money and improve service delivery; how San Diego County enables its employees to bring their own smartphones and tablet PC’s to work to leverage personal mobile devices to improve government productivity through “bring your own device” policies in the workplace; and how different states are addressing the security and privacy issues of such policies. Click here to read agenda.

Ambassador Kirk will address the NACo International Economic Development Task Force on Monday, March 5, at 3:30p.m. in the Fairchild Room. He will discuss U.S. trade policy and its impacts on and opportunities for local economic development.

Also on Monday, March 5, 8:30-9:30 a.m., a special panel discussion – “The 2012 Presidential Elections: What is at Stake for Local Governments?” will take place in Lincoln West, featuring the following:

Panelists:
Julian Epstein
CEO, LMG Inc.

Elroy Sailor
Co Founder and Chief Executive Officer
J.C. Watts Companies

John Feehery
President of Communications &Director of Government Affairs
Quinn Gillespie and Associates

Jamal Simmons
Principal
The Raben Group

Moderator:
Ilene Lieberman
Vice Chair, Large Urban County Caucus
Commissioner, Broward County, FL

Counties on Capitol Hill Day
On Wednesday, March 7, county officials will meet with their Congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. Counties are deeply concerned that federal deficit reduction talks in Washington have focused too much on reductions to domestic, discretionary spending programs that will affect the American people. Click here to review NACo 2012 Key Legislative Priorities.

Educational Opportunities
In addition to carrying the county government message to Capitol Hill, county officials will participate in a variety of educational workshops. Workshop titles include:

- The Future of the Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Planning and Development Programs.
- How do Federal Land-Use Decisions Impact the Local Economy?
- Making Rural Development a Priority in the Farm Bill.
- Highways, Bridges, Buses and Airports: When Will Help Arrive?
- Staying Ahead of Changes in Federal Economic Development Policy.
Other business
NACo's 11 policy steering committees will meet during the conference to review and make recommendations on issues and legislation important to counties and communities. The issues that the committees cover include justice and public safety, agriculture and rural affairs, taxes, environment and energy, telecommunications, economic and community development, healthcare, human services, education, labor and employment, public lands, and transportation.

The policy development process initiated by the steering committees leads to the publication of the American County Platform, which NACo uses as a guide to deliver the county government message to the administration, Congress and the American public.

In addition to the steering committees, NACo has organized caucuses – the Rural Action Caucus and the Large Urban County Caucus – to perform targeted advocacy efforts focused on specific needs of large urban counties and rural counties.

For more information, contact Jim Philipps at 202.942.4220 or jphilipps@naco.org.

Note to Media
Members of the working news media wishing to cover conference events must present their press credentials at the conference press room, located in the Cardozo Room (Terrace Level), to obtain a NACo press badge. The press room will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 3 through Tuesday, March 6. (Press Room phone number: 202.797.4814).

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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.