NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 18, 2014
CONTACT: Brian Namey, bnamey@naco.org, 202.942.4220

Counties sound alarm on Payment In Lieu of Taxes program

Sixty-two percent of counties contain federal public lands

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today urged members of Congress to approve immediate (FY15) and long-term funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, or PILT. Days before its congressional authorization expires, NACo held a briefing with a bipartisan group of lawmakers and launched a new online resource center with national and county-specific information about the PILT program.

“Counties deliver a vast network of services to support federal public lands,” said NACo Executive Director Matthew D. Chase. “From trash collection to road maintenance, from search-and-rescue operations to fire protection, county services allow millions to enjoy federal public lands. These programs help to provide ongoing, vital services and should have ongoing, predictable funding sources.”

Sixty-two percent of counties have federal lands within their boundaries. They provide significant support for national parks and forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas and other land that covers roughly 640 million acres, or nearly 28 percent of the U.S. More than 280 million people visit America’s national parks and other federal public lands each year.

This year, the PILT program provided $437 million to approximately 1,900 counties and other local governments to offset forgone tax revenues due to the presence of substantial acreage of federal land in their jurisdictions. Despite not being able to collect property tax on federal lands, county governments must still provide important services for their residents and visitors to public lands, including solid waste disposal, law enforcement, road and bridge upkeep and emergency medical services. The authorization for PILT is set to expire Sept. 30, 2014.

More than two dozen county officials from fifteen states sounded the call for action during meetings with federal agencies and on Capitol Hill, including a congressional briefing with U.S. Sens. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.); Mike Lee (R-Utah); Mark Udall (D-Colo.); John Walsh (D-Mont.); Ron Wyden (D-Ore.); U.S. Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.); and Chris Stewart (R-Utah).

“Without swift congressional action, communities across the country could face devastating budget shortfalls affecting important programs and services,” Chase said.
To support counties’ advocacy efforts, NACo launched a new online resource center that includes comprehensive information about the PILT program. The hub features detailed profiles for the 1,126 individual counties that receive more than $10,000 of PILT funding, key facts and data points and tips for spreading the word via social media.

For more information, visit http://www.naco.org/PILT.

###

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America’s 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: www.naco.org.