County officials advance rural America’s interests on Capitol Hill

**NACo calls for support of rural development and jobs programs**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Nineteen county officials from 15 states are participating in this year’s National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Rural Action Caucus (RAC) “fly-in” advocacy effort, March 27-29, in Washington, D.C. to raise awareness about critical issues important to economic recovery in rural communities.

Members will meet with 54 congressional offices, five federal agencies and the White House Rural Council to fight to make rural development a priority within farm bill reauthorization, urge passage of a multi-year highway and bridges bill, and urge level funding of public lands programs.

“In an economy struggling toward recovery, the last thing we need is to harm programs that lead directly to economic opportunity and jobs in rural America,” said NACo President Lenny Eliason, who is leading the advocacy effort. “Two good examples are USDA rural development programs and federal funding to support our roads and bridges.”

Each year, NACo’s Rural Action Caucus identifies the most pressing issues facing rural America and brings them to the attention of key administration officials and members of Congress. This year’s priority issues include:

- Oppose unfunded federal mandates and preemptions, especially the “Waters of the U.S. Guidance” expected to soon be issued by EPA;
- Support of making rural development a priority within farm bill reauthorization and level funding for USDA Rural Development Programs;
- Support of a multi-year reauthorization of the highway and bridges bill;
- Support of an extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) and continued mandatory funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), and
- Support of health care services in rural America, especially Medicaid.

The fly-in included a March 28 Congressional Rural Caucus Briefing: “Rural Development in the Farm Bill – Perspectives from Rural County Elected Officials.” Congressional Rural Caucus Co-Chair Adrian Smith
(R-Neb.) and Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-N.C.) offered brief remarks at the beginning of the briefing.
Representing NACo as panelists were NACo President Eliason, Commissioner, Athens County, Ohio;
Supervisor Lu Barron of Linn County, Iowa, NACo’s Rural Action Caucus chair; and
Commissioner Don Larson, Brookings County, S.D, NACo’s Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee chair.

Eliason discussed the benefit of a robust farm bill for rural counties. Barron discussed the major policy
priorities of rural counties, and Larson provided examples of how USDA Rural Development programs
help spur economic innovation in South Dakota.

RAC is the voice for America’s rural counties in Washington. It is a bipartisan coalition of rural elected
officials from across the country striving to enhance the quality of life in rural counties through effective
federal legislation. For more information, contact Erik Johnston at ejohnston@naco.org or 202.942.4230.

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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.