FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 10, 2013
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NACo’s Western Interstate Region sets 2014 priorities for western U.S. counties

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The stability of the historic Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and accurate PILT program revenue forecasting from the federal government were among the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Western Interstate Region (WIR) top priorities adopted during the organization’s fall board of directors’ meeting, Oct. 3-4, in Garfield County, Colo.

The WIR board of directors said county officials representing western U.S. counties will urge Congress to maintain full mandatory funding for the PILT program and identify a multi-year solution for future payments to respect local governments’ annual budgeting process.

WIR, affiliated with NACo, is dedicated to the promotion of western interests within NACo. Its membership consists of 15 western states with membership funded through the individual state associations.

WIR’s 2014 top priorities are as follows:

- Western counties urge Congress to maintain full mandatory funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. Congress should identify a multi-year solution for future payments to respect local governments’ annual budgeting process and desire for more accurate revenue forecasting.

- Western counties support the continuation of federal revenue sharing payments to counties from natural resource extraction activities (i.e. Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, FWS Refuge Revenue Sharing program, and future alternative energy revenue sharing payments).

- Western counties encourage the sustainable use of natural resources for economic development through easing of federal regulations on federal lands. Remove federal barriers to efficient and sustainable natural resource development activities (i.e. federal forest management, Endangered -more-
• Species Act reform, grazing, oil, gas, and mineral extraction). Additionally, counties encourage federal coordination with county governments in the development of utility corridors on public lands.

• Western counties encourage Congress to recognize that many federally owned lands are exempt from local taxation and not eligible as entitlement acres under PILT. Congress should identify ways to develop federal “PILT-like” payments for non-taxable lands including: military, tribal, and trust lands.

• Western counties support the adoption of a multi-year reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Specifically, WIR will work with NACo’s Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee to raise the profile of NACo’s Farm Bill priorities, which include support for renewable energy, beginning and young farmers and flexibly funded rural development programs that encourage regional innovation.

WIR President John Martin, commission chair, Garfield County, Colo., said it is important that Congress keeps the promises made to western counties and communities.

For more information, contact Ryan Yates at 202.942.4207 or visit www.naco.org.

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) assists America’s counties in pursuing excellence in public service. The association works to advance sound public policies, promote county solutions and innovation, foster intergovernmental and public-private partnerships, and provide value added services to save counties and taxpayers money. Founded in 1935, NACo provides the elected and appointed leaders from the nation’s 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs with the knowledge, skills and tools necessary to provide fiscally responsible, quality driven and results oriented policies and services for healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.