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. 4-5 in Kodiak, Alaska.

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 is affiliated with NACo and 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 2012-13 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, 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 Jerome Selby, mayor, Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska, said it is important that Congress keeps the promises made to western counties and communities. He said the board meeting was most productive and that he was thankful for the special guest speakers who participated, including Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska); Schawna Thoma, aide to U.S. Sen. Mark Begich (D-Alaska), and Captain Jerald L. Woloszynski, U.S.C.G., Coast Guard Base Kodiak.

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) 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.