FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 3, 2011

NACo voices federal budget deficit concerns

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties’ (NACo) has sent letters to President Obama and Congressional leaders voicing deep concern that federal budget deficit reduction talks will focus too much on reductions to domestic, discretionary spending programs that will affect the American people.

The letters, dated Feb. 3, outline four key points counties are urging the president and Congress to consider while addressing the deficit:

• The budget deficit cannot be resolved by only cutting domestic, non-military discretionary programs;
• Federal assistance to state and local governments will help mitigate further layoffs;
• Federal investment in state and local infrastructure produces private sector jobs; and
• Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to counties, imposing unfunded mandates, or pre-empting county programs or taxing authority.

"When a recession occurs or the economy falters and there is high unemployment, services at the county level are needed most," wrote NACo President Glen Whitley and Executive Director Larry Naake. "Historically, there is a greater need for social services, health care, counseling, job training and local economic development during times like we are facing now. Domestic, discretionary programs are critical to the ability of counties to carry out their responsibilities as service providers for both the federal and state governments."

In the letters, NACo reiterated its bedrock position that county governments are partners with the Congress, states and the federal government in providing important programs and services to the American people. The association supports maintaining federal financial assistance for county programs at the 2010 fiscal year levels.

"We are working hard, making significant cuts, instituting reforms, and being creative in facing the worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression," Whitley and Naake wrote. "Counties will participate in addressing the challenges our nation is facing and expect the federal government and Congress to do the same without drastically hurting the people we all serve."

Whitley, County Judge, Tarrant County, Texas, said he will bring forward a NACo policy resolution calling for Congress to consider "alternatives to control the rising budget deficit" during NACo’s Legislative Conference, March 5-9 in Washington, D.C. NACo’s Board of Directors is expected to adopt the policy resolution on Monday, March 7.

###

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.