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NACo fights massive cuts to homeland security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today warned that proposed cuts to the FY2012 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Bill would impede progress gained in recent years to effectively and efficiently improve the nation’s counties abilities to protect and serve their communities.

The legislation, which is scheduled to be considered Friday, May 13 in the House of Representatives Appropriations’ Subcommittee on Homeland Security, proposes massive reductions in grants, technical assistance and programs important to states, local governments and public safety agencies nationwide.

Additionally, the legislation proposes a major change to the current formula for distributing state and local grants; and many counties would presumably be at risk of not receiving any future state and local grant assistance from the DHS.

Specifically, the legislation proposes only $1 billion dollars for DHS Grants, Exercises, and Technical Assistance important to states, local governments and public safety agencies. This is a decrease of $1.2 billion compared to the current year, and the legislation also proposes major reductions in DHS’ Fire Grants ($350 million), FEMA Flood Mapping ($120 million), and PreDisaster Mitigation Grants ($40 million).

Additionally, the legislation proposes a major consolidation of programs important to states, local governments and public safety agencies. Specifically, the legislation proposes combining DHS’ State Homeland Security Grant Program, Urban Area Security Initiative Grant Program, Metropolitan Medical Response System, Citizen Corp Program, Rail and Transit Grants, Intercity Bus Security Grants, Port Security Grants, Interoperable Emergency Communications Grants and DHS/FEMA Training, Technical Assistance and Exercises into one single line item; and awarding future grants to States, local governments and public safety agencies at the discretion of the DHS Secretary.

“Counties are strongly opposed to any reduction of funds to DHS’ State and Local Programs and assert that a minimum level of preparedness must be provided to all communities,” said NACo Executive Director Larry E. Naake. “We are asking in the strongest possible terms that members of Congress reject these harmful cuts and continue to work with counties to ensure our communities are well served.”

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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.