NEWS RELEASE

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NACo applauds Senate passage of immigration bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today applauded the U.S. Senate for moving immigration reform forward.

“NACo applauds the U.S. Senate for passing bipartisan legislation which offers the best opportunity in many years to make long overdue reforms to our broken immigration system,” said NACo Executive Director Matt Chase. “NACo endorses many of the key provisions of the bill, including the earned path to citizenship, modernizing the legal immigration system, a sensible guestworker program, and improving border security.

Chase said the nation’s counties are directly affected by immigration because they provide health, education and public safety to all residents regardless of immigration status. Nationwide, counties own and operate 964 hospitals and spend $68 billion on health care annually. In 23 states, counties are the health care providers or payers of last resort for the uninsured or underinsured.

“We are pleased that under the Senate bill county hospitals would continue to receive federal payments for emergency services provided to uninsured individuals regardless of immigrant status,” Chase said.

Under current law, states have the option to provide Medicaid and the Child Health Insurance Program to newly arrived legal immigrant children and pregnant women.

“We are pleased that the Senate bill continues to allow states to provide this coverage and that the bill permits the same coverage to children and pregnant women in Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status,” Chase said. “This approach is good health policy and reduces the need to rely on county hospital emergency rooms.”

Counties, however, are disappointed that the Senate bill does not include a grant program to help states and local government provide health and education to the RPI population, similar to language included in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006.

“We believe that this issue can and should be addressed as the legislative process moves forward,”

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Chase said. “Counties stand ready to work with Senators and members of the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure that comprehensive immigration reform is enacted this year.”

Click here to read NACo’s newly released analysis, “Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Outlook for Counties.” For more information, contact Jim Philipps at 202.942.4220 or jphilipps@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 3,069 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.