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CONTACT: Jim Philipps
202-942-4220, jphilipps@naco.org

NACo applauds disaster mitigation law

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today applauded legislation recently signed into law which contains multiyear authorization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM). The new law also directs FEMA to award grants to communities on a competitive basis and prohibits earmarks.

PL 111-351, an amended version of H.R. 1746, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2009, was signed into law by President Obama on Jan. 4. The law provides that the PDM program be funded at $180 million in FY2011, $200 million in FY 2012, and $200 million in FY 2013.

Earlier versions of the legislation directed Congress to fund the program until 2015. However, the final law cites the “substantial savings generated from the predisaster hazard mitigation program” and encourages Congress to increase funds for PDM after 2013 because it “would be a wise investment.”

For several years, NACo has supported the PDM program and worked to fund and enact a long term authorization for this critical mitigation measure. However, different authorization amounts and language eliminating earmarks within the grant program have delayed final passage for several years.

While NACo has no policy regarding specific authorization amounts or earmarks, the importance of supporting hazard mitigation projects and initiatives remains a key public safety legislative priority for the organization, according to NACo Executive Director Larry E. Naake.

“With enactment of law, counties can continue to expect federal support for implementing hazard reduction measures prior to a disaster event,” Naake said.

The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act was sponsored by former Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), who chaired the House Transportation Chairman in the 111th Congress. Congress approved the legislation prior to the end of 2010, and the legislation is one of the first bills signed into law in 2011.

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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.