



Adopted Policy Resolutions and Platform Changes

National Association of Counties (NACo)

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1 AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS STEERING COMMITTEE

2 3 PLATFORM CHANGE 4

5 STATEMENT OF BASIC PHILOSOPHY

6 The National Association of Counties (NACo) is concerned about the impact of national, state
7 and local policies and decisions affecting rural counties and counties with significant rural
8 communities threatened by urban and suburban development. Approximately 17 percent of the
9 nation's population lives in 2,051 counties deemed 'non-metropolitan,' or rural, according to the
10 U.S. Census Bureau.

11
12 In recent years, however, there has been a serious loss of human and financial resources in many
13 counties as a result of economic trends and governmental agencies and their policies.
14 Deterioration of infrastructure facilities and institutions, such as roads, health care and education
15 systems, is prevalent in many rural counties. American agriculture and its related agribusiness
16 remain a vital part of the U.S. economy as well as a major contributor to economic activity
17 throughout the world.

18
19 Simultaneously, there are other industries that also are becoming an important part of the rural
20 landscape. Long-term economic trends in rural communities show growth in the service and
21 retail trade industries and a variety of other industries in recreation, food service, education, and
22 health care.

23
24 The spread of advanced technology in rural areas especially in communications may make rural
25 areas more attractive in the future to companies offering higher wage jobs. Counties need to
26 recognize the critical importance of technology and the need for an advanced
27 telecommunications infrastructure.

28
29 The federal government should develop a comprehensive national rural policy that recognizes
30 the diverse challenges rural county governments are facing and increases the coordination among
31 local, regional and state governments. In addition, the government should look to ways to
32 streamline and simplify federal regulations and grants to rural counties.

33 34 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

35 Included as part of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform (FAIR Act of 1996),
36 Congress consolidated a number of rural development programs into the Rural Community
37 Advancement Program (RCAP).

38
39 RCAP was comprised of three funding accounts – housing, utilities and business. RCAP
40 provided the flexibility to develop innovative approaches to rural development problems locally.
41 By permitting the transfer of up to 25 percent of the RCAP funds allocated to other programs
42 within RCAP, local officials could direct more assistance towards the enhancement of jobs
43 through education, infrastructure investment and economic development.

44
45 In recent years, funds for RCAP programs are appropriated under new and separate accounts
46 within the Rural Housing, Rural Business Cooperative, and Rural Utility Services. RCAP no
47 longer exists in name; however, program operations and implementation, including the flexibility
48 to transfer funds within each account is not changed.

49
50 NACo supports this flexibility and urges Congress to adequately fund Rural Housing, Rural
51 Business Cooperative and Rural Utility Services during the annual appropriations process.

Furthermore, NACo supports the Congressional Rural Caucus on issues of mutual interest and believes that the caucus is critically important to articulating the strengths and challenges of rural America. NACo also supports the intent of the White House Rural Council and pledges to work with Chairman Tom Vilsack, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, to bring forward the perspectives of rural counties to the council.

A. Rural Housing: Federal regulations often are inflexible and too restrictive in providing adequate quality housing for rural families and transient and permanent farm workers.

Additionally, six percent of rural houses have severe physical problems, including inadequate heating, plumbing, and space. NACo supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) housing programs and opposes any effort to move these programs to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

B. Rural Poverty: According to the USDA and the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 340 persistently rural poor counties throughout the nation, roughly 11 percent of our counties. These areas are defined as persistently poor since twenty percent or more of the population has lived in poverty for a thirty-year time period (1970-2000). Several characteristics bind these persistently poor counties together including, lower education rates and higher levels of unemployment. Congress, the USDA and the Administration should redirect more funds to build economic capacity in these financially distressed counties.

C. Outmigration: Outmigration poses a significant threat to rural counties across the United States. This problem is particularly acute in the nation's heartland – from the Dakotas to North Texas, and from the Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Missouri River – where 72 percent of rural counties on the Great Plains have seen their population shrink by an average of one third.

Consequently, NACo supports legislation to combat the effects of outmigration, including the New Homestead Act, which would provide tax credits and incentives to encourage young people and skilled workers to move back to rural America.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Water and Wastewater: Critical infrastructure, such as water and wastewater, remain a priority for many rural communities. The cost of building, maintaining, and upgrading local water system is a challenge for many small towns and rural counties. Beyond the public health interests, clean and reliable water is a necessity to spur economic growth. Studies have concluded that water and sewer projects can save or create jobs in rural communities by attracting and retaining businesses. Flexible cooperative/collaborative funding opportunities are encouraged.

B. Transportation: Additionally, many counties have to close bridges when they become unsafe and cannot afford to rebuild them. The quality of roads and bridges is declining in many rural areas due to lack of funding. Federal funding for rural roads, bridges, local transit service, and air service needs to increase substantially.

C. Technology: Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), a lack of broadband infrastructure could limit the potential of rural communities to attract and retain businesses and jobs, especially businesses that are dependent on electronic commerce. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to

1 attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major
2 implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine,
3 long distance education, attraction of quality economic development, and improved wages and
4 employment.

5
6 The USDA estimates that more than 65 percent of all cities with populations over 250,000 have
7 cable modem service, while less than five percent of cities with populations less than 10,000
8 have such service. Advanced technology is a major key to closing the information gap between
9 rural and urban areas. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the
10 deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.

11
12 In addition, NACo supports the universal service provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications
13 Act that requires equal and affordable access to advanced telecommunications for rural schools,
14 libraries, and medical facilities. Also, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 endorses the concept
15 that all consumers, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular, and high cost
16 areas, should have equal access to telecommunications and information services.

17
18 NACo also supports tax credits to companies that deploy broadband communications into rural
19 areas to hasten the closure of the digital divide throughout rural America.

20
21 **D. Economic Development:** Rural economic development is generally thought of in terms of
22 improving the employment opportunities, incomes, and well-being of the nation's people by
23 strengthening the capacity of rural America to compete in a global economy.

24
25 NACo supports holistic approaches to rural development, such as the Rural Collaborative
26 Investment Program (RCIP). By incorporating elected county and municipal officials,
27 businesses, and non-profits in a multi-county region, the program would allow multiple sectors a
28 chance to chart the future of their community. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide
29 increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance.

30
31 NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at
32 the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow
33 county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.

34
35 **E. Rural Healthcare:** NACo recognizes the vital role that healthcare plays in rural America.
36 The healthcare industry is an economic development engine and access to affordable healthcare
37 is essential to spur new businesses. NACo supports strengthening the healthcare delivery system
38 in rural America, including ambulatory services.

39 40 **AGRICULTURE**

41 **A. Farm Bill Authorization:** The ability of county governments to provide services financed
42 by property and other local taxes is dependent on farm income and rural business. Agriculture is
43 a key component of economic development and should be included in any comprehensive rural
44 development program.

45
46 NACo supports expansion of the crop insurance program to include additional crops, livestock,
47 and poultry. Additionally, NACo encourages Congress to provide a subsidy for hay production
48 to assist agriculture communities, prevent soil erosion, and improve water quality.

49
50 NACo supports agricultural reforms that will improve health and protect the environment of all
51 Americans through significantly strengthening federal nutrition programs, improving access to

1 healthy food, promoting environmental stewardship and conservation, protecting our food
2 supply, and robustly funding rural development initiatives based on best practices in
3 coordination with local officials. All titles of the farm bill are important to the vitality of our
4 nation, therefore, NACo supports full funding of all titles of this important legislation.

5
6 NACo supports investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurship programs and facilities that
7 process, distribute, and develop value-added products using locally-grown commodities
8 purchased from local farmers to meet the demand for local, healthy food.

9
10 NACo supports the definition of biomass from Titles I & III of the 2008 Farm Act, which states
11 that renewable biomass is:

12
13 For federal lands: Materials that are byproducts of preventive treatments (e.g., trees, wood) that
14 are removed to reduce hazardous fuels, to reduce or contain disease or insect infestation, or to
15 restore ecosystem health; would not otherwise be used for higher value products; and are
16 harvested from the National Forest System land or public lands in accordance with public laws,
17 land management plans, and requirements for old-growth maintenance.

18
19 For non-federal lands: Any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis
20 from nonfederal land or land belonging to Indian tribes, including renewable plant materials
21 (feed grains, other organic commodities, other plants and trees, algae), waste material (crop
22 residue, other vegetative waste material including wood waste and wood residue), animal waste
23 and byproducts (fats, oils, greases, and manure), construction waste, and food waste/yard waste.

24
25 **B. Family Farm:** NACo supports the concept of family farms in producing agricultural goods.
26 Federal policies should support the maintenance and continued existence of family farms. NACo
27 supports an examination by Congress and the Administration into the declining revenue to
28 agriculture producers from food sales while there has been no reduction in the cost of food.

29
30 To keep the integrity of the family farm in place and in turn the fiscal solvency of many counties
31 dependent upon agriculture, NACo supports the beginning farmer loan program. NACo also
32 supports incentives, such as low-interest loans and tax credits, to be provided to young people
33 entering farming and agribusiness in rural areas.

34
35 Farming is not simply an occupation but a lifestyle, and it is critical that farmers be able to teach
36 their children and grandchildren how to perform agricultural work safely and responsibly.
37 Statutory child labor parental exemptions should be kept in place in order to ensure the viability
38 of the family farm.

39
40 NACo supports 'agribility' programs within USDA that help physically challenged farmers in
41 their agricultural duties.

42
43 **C. Environment:** NACo recognizes the need to protect our nation's most environmentally
44 sensitive lands and waters. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program
45 (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP),
46 Conservation Security Program (CSP), and others are important sources for technical assistance
47 and are needed to help communities implement many important conservation measures.

48
49 NACo supports USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the valuable
50 technical assistance their field offices provide. The NRCS plays a critical role for counties by

1 addressing local conservation issues pertinent to county governments as well as Soil and Water
2 Conservation Districts.

3
4 NACo urges Congress to fund and expand backlogged farm conservation programs such as the
5 Conservation and Wetlands Reserve, Buffer, and Farmland Protection Programs. Flexibility
6 should be allowed in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to permanently protect
7 locally identified critical habitat areas. NRCS should be the sole federal agency with
8 jurisdictional authority over agricultural wetlands areas in coordination with local officials.

9
10 NACo also supports USDA's National Conservation Buffer Initiative and its attempt to
11 encourage the establishment of long-term conservation practices such as the creation of buffer
12 strips, planting of trees for windbreaks, wildlife and other conservation enhancement purposes.
13 This initiative will help landowners make good use of their best cropland and maintain their
14 marginal area lands.

15
16 NACo is concerned about the loss of productive farmland to nonagricultural uses because of
17 increasing development. NACo urges Congress, and the USDA to support measures to retain,
18 protect, and improve agricultural land, and conserve topsoil, consistent with local land use
19 policies and controls. An important aspect of the conservation process is the maintenance of
20 financial and technical assistance to establish practical methods to protect farmlands for
21 American farm families and retain farmland to maintain stable production of farm commodities.

22
23 The role of federal, states and counties in coordination should be a partnership enhanced by a
24 common goal in identifying and implementing conservation management practices. This would
25 include the targeting of priority protection areas in developing sound agricultural conservation
26 management programs.

27
28 NACo urges the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to use the best scientific data on
29 pesticide use, residues on crops, and toxicity, so that important pesticide uses are preserved; and
30 to work closely with the USDA to improve consultation with all stakeholders.

31
32 NACo supports federal incentives that reward American agriculture for the implementation of
33 best management practices that protect the environment and opposes any attempts to impose a
34 federal greenhouse gas tax on livestock.

35
36 **D. Pest Management:** Wildlife can cause significant damage to private and public property,
37 including agricultural crops, livestock, forests, pastures, and urban and rural structures. NACo
38 supports USDA Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Service
39 programs and encourages Congress and the Administration to provide necessary resources to
40 strengthen these programs. NACo also opposes efforts to weaken WS programs, including
41 efforts to decrease funding and change authorized abilities to cooperate with counties and other
42 entities needing assistance.

43
44 **E. Farmworkers:** According to USDA's Economic Research Service the total U.S. agricultural
45 labor force has declined over the past century and hired farm workers have become the largest
46 proportion of all farm workers. An estimated half of hired farm workers lack the legal status to
47 work in the U.S. These workers are a major presence in rural communities across our country
48 and are vital for the economic health of our agricultural sector, from large producers to family
49 farms and ranches. The H-2A visa program – the nation's only legally sanctioned guestworker
50 program – does not have the capacity to handle the nation's demand for hired farm workers.
51 NACo supports a sensible and orderly guestworker program for farm workers that significantly

simplifies administrative requirements for employers, provides temporary legal status and protections for migrant farm workers, and the possibility of obtaining permanent legal residence in the United States.

In addition NACo supports the following principles:

- **The Future Flow of Agricultural Jobs:** The continuous flow of a legal, reliable and stable workforce is necessary to ensure the future of agricultural production in the U.S.
- **Wages:** The wage must be an economically viable rate for agriculture, representing the local area.
- **Private Right of Protection:** There must be protections in place to ensure that agricultural employers are not at risk from class action litigation.

F. Property Rights of Horse Owners: NACo calls for the humane treatment of horses in the ownership, raising, transporting, and processing that is carried out under the supervision of USDA. NACo opposes efforts to curtail the property rights of horse owners and specifically opposes efforts to amend the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines to be slaughtered for human consumption, and for other purposes. This federal legislation will make it illegal to transport horses to a packing plant or to release any horses to any Canadian or Mexican packing plants, thereby totally shutting down the “harvest” market for used and unwanted horses.

Only about 6,000 spaces are available nationwide for horse rescue facilities and the vast majority are already full. Unwanted horses are detrimental to county governments as horse owners release their unwanted horses into the wild, thus making it the county’s responsibility to collect and dispose of them. Horse owners who wish to seek an additional value for their spent horses by sending them to slaughter should have the right to do so. Those who wish to retain them to die of old age, or euthanize and bury them on the farm or ranch should have that right as well.

G. Renewable Energy: NACo supports comprehensive legislation to encourage and enable American Agriculture to provide at least 25 percent of the total energy, including wind and solar, consumed in the United States by 2025 while continuing to produce abundant, safe and affordable food and fiber.

Biomass fuels (ethanol, bio-diesel) are paramount not only to the reduction of pollution in counties throughout the nation, but also serve as revenue generators for many farmers that are struggling with low prices for their crops and increased costs of production. Their use and development should be encouraged and enhanced by Congress.

While NACo is supportive of tax incentives to increase usage and reliance on renewable energy sources, it opposes mandates that will result in undue fiscal hardship to rural and agricultural users.

In addition, NACo supports the increased use and promotion of wind energy. Wind energy represents a clean and renewable source of electric power and it has great potential and should receive tax credits for production.

H. Drought and Natural Disasters: The results of droughts and other natural disasters cause great economic loss, high unemployment, and other long-range problems. NACo is concerned

1 about the adverse impact these weather-related disasters have upon counties and other local
2 governments.

3
4 NACo urges the Administration and Congress to adopt a national drought policy consistent with
5 the recommendations of the National Drought Policy Commission's report: Preparing for
6 Drought in the 21st Century. These programs should provide for long-range solutions to
7 minimize the effects of future droughts and disasters as well as the economic revitalization of the
8 community.

9
10 NACo urges Congress and the Administration to pass disaster assistance aimed at farmers during
11 times of drought and abnormal precipitation.

12
13 **I. International Trade:** NACo believes that the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in
14 world markets would be enhanced by the removal of certain barriers to trade in some foreign
15 markets and by the termination of subsidies by foreign competitors.

16
17 NACo supports legislation that provides for uniformity in product grade, quality and inspections
18 standards for all imports and exports.

19
20 NACo is opposed to the use of agricultural commodities as an embargo tool for U.S. foreign
21 policy. The use of commodity embargoes has an adverse effect on long-term market demand and
22 thus on the rural economy.

23 24 **J. Outreach Partnerships**

25 Across the country, counties partner with federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and
26 private sector interests; non-profit organizations; and colleges and universities to fund
27 community outreach and educational initiatives

28
29 NACo reaffirms the importance of the work of the outreach programs and calls on federal, state,
30 local and tribal governments; public and private sector interests; non-profit organizations; and
31 colleges and universities to maintain their support. NACo also calls upon the Extension Service
32 to ensure that services adapt regularly to the needs of counties and create a formal process to
33 ensure that counties play a partnership role in selecting extension staff and the topical focus of
34 local agents.

35
36 NACo supports the mission of the USDA and encourages it to focus on expanding the
37 competitiveness of American agriculture and supporting rural businesses and industries that
38 enhance rural development and quality of life in rural communities.

39
40 Research and extension activities that address the constantly changing economic and technical
41 changes in agriculture are strongly supported by NACo. That includes placing a higher priority
42 on research regarding alternative uses of agricultural products and identification of potential new
43 uses including specialty markets that provide opportunities for agricultural entrepreneurs.

44
45 NACo calls on Congress to provide needed support to USDA so that it may explore innovative
46 approaches for building community capacity and introduce additional economic enhancement
47 opportunities to rural businesses.

48 49 **FOOD SAFETY**

50 NACo supports the food safety inspection system for meat processing plants. This new system
51 replaces a sight and smell technique with scientific methods and should help other processing

plants better target and reduce harmful bacteria on their products. Protecting the welfare of all American consumers, especially our children, is the responsibility of public officials. Maintaining confidence in our nation's food supply benefits agricultural producers and food manufacturers located throughout our nation. NACo urges USDA to not exempt any particular type of processing method from rigorous inspection.

NACo urges expanded funding for research on the uses of biotechnology.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the EPA, and other federal organizations place controls on the legal use of certain pesticides and chemicals in the United States, however in many countries the use of pesticides and other chemicals, which have not been approved or have been banned in the United States, is a common practice. Unfortunately, many of these same foodstuffs are routinely shipped to the United States.

NACo urges Congress and support mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) provisions in any agricultural authorizing or appropriation bills. NACo strongly urges the federal government to require that all fruits, vegetables, meats and other foodstuffs entering the United States be legibly and indelibly labeled in such manner as to indicate to the consumer the country of origin.

Additionally, NACo supports the establishment of a national animal identification system that provides financial assistance to producers to comply with the system. Furthermore, NACo urges the USDA to mandate that all countries that wish to import livestock to the United States must meet or exceed U.S. standards of care regarding Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and foot and mouth disease.

NACo urges the USDA to continue the ban on importation of livestock from countries with confirmed cases of BSE and/or foot and mouth disease and strengthen enforcement standards in order to guarantee safe food for our nation. USDA should conduct inspections at the site of production of all food products that are exported to the United States financed by the producer.

NACo also supports the promotion of healthy diets for all residents, including strengthening incentives and infrastructure to encourage more fruit/vegetable production, better access to fresh foods and investment programs promoting healthy food, expansion of programs that help communities' invest in retail markets, food-based businesses and increasing access to farmers markets and farm-to-cafeteria programs that bring the freshest locally grown food into school lunch programs.

NACo supports local food producers that sell direct to consumers and calls on USDA and FDA to provide increased outreach and technical assistance to these producers to ensure that they are implementing best practices in food safety.

METHAMPHETAMINE EPIDEMIC

NACo supports adequate funding for the fight against the devastating methamphetamine epidemic. NACo supports increased funding for methamphetamine research, enforcement, treatment, and education of users and their families, and cleanup of contaminated sites.

Over the last decade, a devastating and highly-addictive drug has spread across the country, especially in rural counties.

The harmful long-term effects of meth include bone loss, malnutrition, liver, kidney and lung damage, and psychiatric problems. Yet, the effects of meth not only exist for users. Individuals,

1 especially children, who are exposed to the toxic chemicals can also develop severe respiratory,
2 neural and other health problems.

3
4 Investigating and busting meth labs, corrections, court costs, treatment and clean-up are all direct
5 costs to county governments as a result of the skyrocketing use and manufacturing of
6 meth. -Additionally, National statistics suggest that in at least seventy percent of all meth arrests,
7 there is a child living in the home. These children many times suffer from neglect and abuse.

8
9 NACo urges Congress and the administration to commit more resources to fight this harmful
10 epidemic. Specifically, NACo supports the Methamphetamine Remediation Research Act of
11 2007, P.L. 110-43, which provides a research program for remediation of closed
12 methamphetamine production laboratories. NACo also supports grant programs to facilitate the
13 creation of methamphetamine precursor electronic logbook systems.

14 15 **STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE PURPOSE**

16 In addition to studying agriculture and rural development issues and recommending NACo
17 policy positions, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee has an oversight role
18 with other policy committees on issues affecting rural counties. This committee will recommend
19 issues to be studied, indicate the impact of policies on rural counties, and seek input into policy
20 Resolutions drafted by other policy committees.

21
22 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

23 24 **RESOLUTIONS**

25 26 **Resolution on the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration**

27
28 **Issue:** Large corporate influence on agriculture policy.

29
30 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports a GIPSA ruling that ensures a fair, competitive market for all
31 grain and livestock producers.

32
33 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

34 35 **Resolution Opposing More Stringent Regulation of Particulate Matter**

36
37 **Issue:** Particulate matter regulation

38
39 **Adopted Policy:** NACo opposes any attempts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
40 (EPA) to impose regulation of Particulate Matter (PM or dust) at levels more stringent than
41 current standards.

42
43 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

44 45 **Resolution Supporting Local Food Systems in the Farm Bill**

46
47 **Issue:** Supporting Local Food Systems

48
49 **Adopted Policy:** Support county development and expansion of local food systems by
50 incorporating into the Farm Bill preference for locally grown and produced foods.

1 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

2
3 **Resolution on Surplus Military Equipment Agreement between U.S. Department of**
4 **Defense and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
5

6 **Issue:** Regulatory standards placed on surplus equipment utilized by rural counties.
7

8 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports the continuation of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)
9 program that provides surplus military equipment to state and local governments. NACo
10 supports continuation of the national security exemption granted by the U.S. Environmental
11 Protection Agency (EPA) for the use of surplus military equipment by state and local
12 governments.
13

14 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

PLATFORM CHANGES

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

STATEMENT OF BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The National Association of Counties (NACo) recognizes the critical role of county governments in the overall economic vitality of our nation through the development of viable urban, suburban and rural communities. To exercise this role, county officials must implement local policies and intergovernmental initiatives that comprehensively address such issues as affordable housing, economic development, land use planning, commercial development, job retention and creation, employment centers, and infrastructure capacity.

County governments should ensure that community, economic and workforce development resources are accessible to all socioeconomic groups. Moreover, a broad range of resources and responsibilities make county governments the natural political entity to provide leadership in administering programs and delivering services. County governments play a vital role in coordination and planning efforts because many federal and state programs emphasize regional approaches to community, economic and workforce development planning. Since counties have limited resources and capacity, state and federal programs should allow for more flexible and cost-effective administration that will result in more efficient local management to meet the goals and objectives of state and federal programs.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. The Federal Role in Community Development: In order to address the community development social and economic needs in urban, suburban and rural counties, federal programs must be funded at levels commensurate with national needs. Federal agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Economic Development Administration (EDA), Small Business Administration (SBA), Appalachian Regional Commission, Tennessee Valley Authority, Delta Regional Authority, Denali Commission, USDA Rural Development, and Department of Labor are critical for stimulating local economies and leveraging private sector resources.

B. Community Development Block Grant: NACo strongly supports the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program established in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The CDBG program provides increased opportunities for elected county officials to plan, implement, and evaluate local community development and housing assistance programs.

Under the Act, county officials, and particularly those whose counties receive urban county designation, are afforded additional resources to address long-range physical, social, housing and economic development needs in their jurisdictions in a comprehensive manner. Counties commit CDBG funds to projects that are determined to meet local priorities in addressing development, housing, economic infrastructure and low income needs.

Recognizing that federal funds and local capacity to administer this program are a limited resource, NACo supports the flexible use of CDBG funds to address certain immediate and unanticipated national priorities in line with the following principles:

- That national priorities not diminish local priorities and commitments;
- Additional funding must be provided for any new initiatives or responsibilities to be undertaken with CDBG funds;
- Any new initiatives that are proposed to be funded with CDBG funds must further the original purposes of the Act or be funded under a new title with separate funding; and
- More flexible and streamlined administration of federal and state mandates to allow cost-effective methods of compliance and administration.

NACo endorses the linkage provided in the Act between community development and housing assistance programs. Counties are required to submit consolidated plans. This provision gives counties increased leverage in addressing not only the housing needs of those residing, or expected to reside, in their jurisdictions, but also in determining housing location and evaluating the growth implications of such development.

In order for the potential of the CDBG program to be fully realized, it must be fully funded and properly administered. NACo urges the Congress, HUD and the Office of Management and Budget to comprehensively review the adequacy of present and future program levels, so that all counties, not just those that receive a direct entitlement, can participate in this important program area.

In addition, NACo opposes the imposition of a funding threshold to receive CDBG formula funds to directly or elimination of “grandfathering” provisions which allows cities and counties to maintain their entitlement status. NACo also does not support diverting CDBG formula funds to other categorical grant programs.

Finally, NACo recommends that Congress stop the proliferation of set-asides within the CDBG and HOME programs.

C. Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities: NACo supports federally designated empowerment zones and enterprise communities that respect local regulations and local contributions to the success of the zone and are distributed equitably throughout the nation and between urban and rural counties. Local governments should undertake a voluntary review of local provisions that might impede economic development.

Federal waivers should not override state and local laws or regulations. Any local, state or federal incentives to establish zones should emphasize the retention and expansion of small businesses that create the majority of new jobs.

The program should provide for local government input in developing and implementing comprehensive plans, so that counties’ critical role in delivering and coordinating a vast array of social services is maintained. Where feasible, employment aspects of zones should be coordinated with job training services.

D. The Community Reinvestment Act: NACo strongly supports the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and opposes any effort to weaken the Act, because continuing disparities in mortgage lending adversely impact low-income, distressed, and minority communities. Since its passage in 1977, the CRA has been responsible for many loans and investments to traditionally underserved inner-city and rural communities nationwide.

By assisting local governments expand private investment in these neighborhoods, the CRA has helped strengthen the tax base and thus improve the fiscal condition of many communities. Investment in housing and small business development made possible by the CRA has created jobs, expanded homeownership opportunities, and improved neighborhood stability.

HOUSING

A. The Need for Affordable, Workforce and Entry Level Housing: County governments have a responsibility to help assure decent housing for all segments of their population. Counties should continue to identify and meet the needs of very low, low and moderate-income households, including those with special housing needs. Whenever possible, counties should take steps to remove all discrimination in the housing market, including prohibiting exclusionary zoning practices. All levels of government should ensure enforcement of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 through expeditious resolution of allegations of fair housing violations.

Concentrations of assisted housing for very low, low and moderate-income families in one geographic area should be avoided and mixed-income housing encouraged. Federal and state governments as well as counties should be aware of the interrelationship of social issues and housing and provide appropriate supportive services and facilities.

Counties should encourage innovations in housing technology, design, approval, and construction in order to lower the cost of decent, safe, and sanitary shelter. National performance criteria and minimum standards for building materials and practices should be developed along with expanded research on building construction that take into account energy conservation. To the greatest extent possible, housing should be constructed with energy efficiency in mind to reduce increasing housing costs and resource consumption.

The federal government should prepare a model building code that includes separate building codes for modular, mobile, and other forms of factory built housing.

Counties and states also should assess the impact of local land use policies on housing costs. Federal, state, and local agencies should periodically review their off-site and on-site development standards, as well as their methods and procedures as to zoning, subdivision controls, and environmental standards, to ensure that they reflect the state-of-the-art and that their standards are not excessive. When appropriate, employer housing should be planned to allow homeowners to live close to work in order to reduce commuting costs and use of energy. The federal government should not make housing and community development funding contingent upon HUD approval of a jurisdiction's local regulations affecting housing affordability and availability.

B. State and Local Roles in Housing: States and local governments should collaborate on their respective roles in reducing housing costs and increasing the supply of affordable units, including establishment of state and local housing finance agencies. This analysis might consider ways to seek uniformity in tax assessment practices.

State governments also should adopt legislation clarifying the respective rights of owners/occupants, and landlords/tenants. Moreover, NACo urges industry groups and government at all levels to implement programs and take legislative/regulatory action necessary to eliminate predatory lending practices.

C. The Federal Role in Housing: The federal government should follow a national housing policy that embodies clear annual housing goals, provides adequate and predictable funding

1 levels, offers incentives for energy efficient buildings and builds on partnerships with state and
2 local governments and the private and nonprofit sectors in support of new construction and
3 rehabilitation for rental and homeownership properties, particularly for low and moderate-
4 income persons.

5
6 Federal policy should allow for voluntary adoption of fair share housing programs on a
7 metropolitan area basis, address the housing needs of rural America, expand the federal
8 government's role in credit enhancement, and preserve the Federal Housing Administration's
9 single and multifamily housing insurance programs.

10
11 NACo supports legislation that makes funding available to state and local governments to
12 address affordable and workforce housing needs.

13
14 The lack of affordable housing at the state and local level is a national crisis. Over the years,
15 housing has become more and more unaffordable. Homeowners are forced to either live beyond
16 their financial resources and/or live long distances from the communities in which they work.
17 This commute creates transit and social issues that put demands on counties.

18
19 When Congress considers comprehensive tax reform, NACo urges it to protect key tax code
20 incentives that stimulate private investment in single-family and multifamily affordable housing
21 and neighborhood revitalization. These include tax-exempt single-family and multifamily
22 housing private activity bonds, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and New Markets Tax Credits.

23
24 **1. The HOME Investment Partnerships Program:** The Cranston-Gonzalez National
25 Affordable Housing Act is landmark legislation that reestablishes a major federal
26 commitment to housing. The HOME Investment Partnerships program, which is the
27 centerpiece of this Act, builds upon the significant capacity and experience of county and
28 other local and state governments to design and implement affordable housing programs for
29 low and moderate-income persons. In order to maximize the program's effectiveness, county
30 governments must be allowed considerable flexibility in their use of HOME funds to address
31 identified local needs.

32
33 Sixty percent of HOME funds are allocated to urban counties and metropolitan cities and the
34 balance to the states. Awarding the bulk of funds to local governments reduces
35 bureaucracies at the state level that impede local flexibility.

36
37 NACo urges Congress to pass legislation authorizing a federal housing production program
38 within the HOME program.

39
40 **2. Federally Owned Residential Property:** The federal government, due to foreclosures
41 and abandonment of federally insured houses, owns thousands of residential properties
42 throughout the country. These properties are not only a tax burden for local government, but
43 also contribute to rapid neighborhood deterioration and decline. Most are vacant and subject
44 to vandalism, becoming breeding grounds for crime and delinquent behavior.

45
46 NACo strongly believes that the federal government, in cooperation with local governments,
47 should provide mechanisms for returning these homes to sound condition. All local efforts to
48 rehabilitate and occupy these properties should be supported. Counties should cooperate
49 with the federal government in rehabilitating and returning these properties to the housing
50 market. In no case, however, should the federal government ignore its responsibility for the

condition of these homes and shift the burden for reclaiming these properties to state, county, or city government.

3. Preservation of the Low-Income Housing Stock: Many low-income rental housing units receive federal assistance, and many are insured through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

In the absence of a preservation strategy, many of these units are likely to be lost from the low-income rental inventory through defaults on mortgages, and others could be lost if owners prepay mortgages and convert properties to market-rent. NACo supports strategies that preserve the supply of low-income rental housing stock.

NACo generally supports legislation that provides a tax credit to help offset the negative tax liability for owners of federally assisted housing to encourage transfer of their property to a preservation entity that agrees to keep it affordable for a period of at least thirty years. Such efforts will minimize the risk of property deterioration and loss of economic value of affordable housing units.

4. Restructuring the Federal Housing Administration Portfolio: NACo supports refining the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) portfolio. The FHA multifamily portfolio must address federal budgetary concerns and ease federal regulatory burdens that have increased the cost of operating Section 8 housing for owners and the cost of subsidizing such housing to HUD.

5. Preserving Section 8 Housing: NACo supports preserving Section 8 housing and preventing the displacement of the tenants. NACo urges the administration and Congress to take the necessary steps to preserve local communities' stock of affordable housing by adopting tax policies that encourage the transfer of properties outside of CDBG, HOME, and other HUD programs.

NACo urges Congress to pass legislation amending the Housing Choice Voucher Program to improve its use in the development and preservation of housing for low- and moderate-income families. Specifically, NACo calls on Congress to:

- Expand the limit for project-based vouchers from twenty to 35 percent of a locality's allocation;
- Consistent with current performance standards, require HUD to reallocate unused vouchers to other jurisdictions in a specified time period annually;
- Modify the targeting requirements to allow sixty percent of the vouchers to be made available for households at or below thirty percent of median income and up to forty to fifty percent of median income, with households below or at thirty percent being given preference; and;
- Restore the fifty percentile of the fair market rent standard to promote the de-concentration of families in poverty;
- Provide more flexibility in initial and annual inspection of units to be occupied by voucher holders. Accept inspections from other agencies and reduce the frequency of annual inspections for projects with good track records;
- Remove disincentives to forming consortia to administer voucher programs. In addition, NACo does not support block-granting of the Section 8 program because it will result in a reduction of funding sold on the basis of more flexibility;

- Insure that program administrators have a system of reserves in order to deal with unforeseen changes in market conditions, family incomes, appropriations, administration and additional authorized vouchers.

6. Use of Tax Code for Multifamily Rental Housing: NACo supports incentives in the tax code to stimulate investment in affordable housing, including continuing the ability of counties to issue tax-exempt single and multifamily housing bonds and allocate Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. NACo supports legislation amending Section 149(b) of the Internal Revenue Code to permanently add Federal Home Loan Banks to the list of entities permitted to credit and/or enhance tax exempt bonds.

NACo also supports removing the penalty that lowers the value of the tax credit from nine percent to four percent when used in conjunction with tax-exempt financing for multifamily housing.

7. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: NACo continues to supports permanent status of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The credit accounts for many of the new apartments constructed in the United States, and virtually all of the apartments constructed or rehabilitated for low-income renters. Permanent status of this tax credit must be maintained so that potential investors will not be discouraged from making investments and housing providers can make appropriate planning and administrative decisions.

NACo is very concerned that any future proposal to eliminate the double taxation of corporate dividends through an “excludable dividend amount” would have an adverse impact on tax-exempt bonds and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

8. Commercial Revitalization Tax Credit: NACo supports the Commercial Revitalization Tax Credit (CRTC) to provide business growth in distressed areas. The CRTC can be an important and worthwhile incentive for business investment in specially-designated revitalization areas to bring communities back to life. Private business investment in these revitalization areas will help boost the economic vitality of these communities, and provide opportunities for new job growth. New business construction and business rehabilitation can enhance the physical environment of distressed areas in communities around the nation, while improving their social and economic conditions.

9. Single-Family Homeownership Tax Credit: NACo endorses the concept of a homeownership tax credit designed to provide homeownership opportunities for low and moderate-income families. Homeownership gives families a stake in their communities and increases the stability and vitality of neighborhoods. Local elected officials support legislative efforts towards the creation of an investor-based tax credit that would encourage the development of single-family affordable housing.

10. Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs): NACo strongly supports the continuation of a government role in the secondary market for the Nation’s mortgage system. GSEs are chartered by Congress to provide stability in the secondary market for residential mortgages, respond appropriately to the capital markets, and promote access to mortgage credit throughout the nation. In that role, they provide liquidity to the market by buying and packaging mortgages into mortgage-backed securities that are sold to investors. This process is essential to maintaining a flow of capital to the mortgage market. GSEs are key partners with county governments in expanding affordable housing opportunities for first-time and other homebuyers.

Government-Sponsored Enterprises have been leaders in the creation of innovative lending programs to finance affordable housing. The GSEs' mission assures that mortgage capital will be focused on the development of tools that create mainstream products and services tailored to the affordable housing marketplace. The GSEs work through national and local lenders and county governments to innovate and take prudent risks in providing mortgage capital to develop and sustain strong communities. The GSEs also have been essential investors in tax-exempt single family and multifamily housing bonds and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, essential tools used by counties to expand affordable housing opportunities.

NACo supports a federal role in the secondary market for the nation's mortgage system to provide stability for residential mortgages and to help expand access to mortgage credit and affordable housing opportunities for first time homebuyers and other homebuyers and renters. In any reform of the housing finance system Congress should provide for a continuation of the 30-year mortgage, support for affordable rental housing including the provision of credit enhancement and insurance products in support of county affordable housing programs and permitting county lending programs to cover some or all of the down payment for first-time homebuyers who are adequately counseled in the responsibilities of homeownership.

11. Lead-Based Paint: NACo supports additional funding to offset the substantial increase in the cost to rehabilitate housing units using CDBG and HOME funds due to the presence of lead-based paint hazards.

Many communities have experienced a substantial increase in the cost of their CDBG and HOME funded rehabilitation and homeownership programs to implement lead-based paint mitigation strategies, without a source of funds to pay for the increased cost.

This regulation was issued under sections 1012 and 1013 of the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, which is Title X of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992, and covers all housing assisted through CDBG and HOME, including housing where no children under the age of six are present. It has been documented that there is a lack of a sufficient number of trained and certified lead-based paint professionals, such as risk assessors, inspectors, abatement contractors, and laboratories to implement the regulation in all communities. In addition, this regulation will impact the timely expenditure of CDBG and HOME funds. NACo supports federal support of additional resources to help local governments implement the requirements of this federally mandated regulation.

NACo supports revision of the National Manufactured Housing and Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974 to make and keep current; and address concerns with the construction and safety standard of manufactured homes. NACo supports the modernization of the Act by establishing a process for the development, revision, and interpretation of federal construction and safety standards for manufactured homes.

12. Homeless Assistance: NACo supports full funding of federal homeless assistance programs. NACo supports efforts to convert categorical housing programs for the homeless into a block grant program. The programs should give localities sufficient flexibility to address identified local priorities and needs. Localities should be provided with sufficient funds for program administration and capacity building of local service providers. Caps

1 should not apply to supportive services. Finally, urban, suburban, and rural counties should
2 be able to form consortia to effectively implement continuum of care plans.

3
4 NACo strongly recommends that Congress and the Administration enact legislation that
5 provides dedicated full funding for existing Shelter Plus Care programs that are separate
6 from the HUD McKinney Act Supportive Housing Program, while maintaining current
7 Shelter Plus Care regulations and consistency with the successful Continuum of Care
8 approach.

9
10 NACo also calls for an end to the practice of discharging large numbers of people into
11 homelessness from hospitals, mental health and chemical dependency treatment facilities,
12 jails and prisons without adequate community support systems. NACo commits to urging
13 Congress to make investments in additional affordable and supportive housing alternatives
14 from mainstream systems, so that supportive housing is available to those who are homeless
15 or would be homeless without it.

16
17 NACo supports legislation to provide additional federal resources to develop housing with
18 supportive services, including mental health services, to help the reintegration of “public
19 safety” ex-offenders into the community and the housing market. These additional federal
20 resources must not be at the expense of existing HUD programs, Low-Income Housing Tax
21 Credits, or any other federally funded domestic program.

22
23 NACo endorses the Administration’s national goal of ending chronic homelessness in ten
24 years. NACo supports the ten-year planning process of the Interagency Council on
25 Homelessness, which recognizes that the abolition of chronic homelessness requires
26 collaboration and coordination of resources in performance-based strategies at all levels of
27 government, together with community institutions, businesses, and faith-based organizations.
28 NACo encourages counties to develop Ten-Year Plans incorporating the latest research on
29 effective engagement, housing, and services strategies to prevent and end chronic
30 homelessness.

31 32 **13. Special Needs Housing:**

33
34 **a. Housing Options for an Aging Population:** NACo supports the development of
35 local housing options that assist older persons to continue living in their dwellings.
36 These options may include home equity conversion, home maintenance, accessory
37 apartments or other secondary units and shared/group residences. When older persons
38 are no longer able to live in their existing dwellings, their options should include
39 congregate housing, continuing care retirement communities, assisted living and other
40 appropriately designed multi-family or group living complexes.

41
42 In appropriate circumstances, family caregivers who wish to alter their homes to provide
43 needed non-institutional support for older parents should not be penalized by zoning
44 regulations and higher property taxes from adapting their residences for this purpose.
45 Efforts should be made to support older persons living in their own dwellings or in
46 congregate housing through the integrated delivery of social services in the community.

47
48 **b. Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS:** There is an urgent need for
49 communities to provide appropriate and affordable housing for persons and families
50 living with the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and human immunodeficiency
51 virus (AIDS) who are at greater risk of illness and possible homelessness.

In order to better coordinate the delivery of health care and housing services, counties as well as cities should become eligible to be allocating agencies for metropolitan areas under the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program. Counties and cities throughout the country have demonstrated that they will develop fair allocation and implementation procedures that meet the needs of entire communities.

14. Refining the Mortgage Revenue Bond Program: NACo supports the Mortgage Revenue Bond program and the increased purchase price limits due to the recent economic downturn. NACo supports preservation of the Qualified Veterans Mortgage Bonds (QVMB), bonding authority for states.

15. Employer Assisted Housing: NACo supports legislation that would encourage employers, counties, and municipalities to invest in employer-assisted housing programs by providing a tax credit to partially offset the costs of such programs.

16. Foreclosures: NACo supports programs that reduce the number of foreclosures, encourage refinancing/restructuring mortgages that allow families to retain their homes, and lower the inventory of vacant and abandoned homes to eliminate blight and revitalize the housing market.

COUNTY ROLE IN HOUSING

A. Planning: Local elected officials, after appropriate citizen input, should develop guidelines for areas of development opportunity (where growth should be encouraged and facilitated) based on explicit standards to protect critical areas. Any state and/or regional review of local plans should only be for consistency with these guidelines and standards. Local land use plans should be based, among other things, upon demographic and marketing trends and upon local capital improvement projects which provide the infrastructure for growth.

Natural resource inventories (as opposed to environmental impact statements) should be undertaken on a metropolitan area basis to identify hazardous areas where no development can take place, areas of critical concern, such as productive agricultural land, where limited development can take place, and areas where no impediments exist. Federal standards for programs necessary for growth (such as water and sewer funding) should be based on the growth needs of each area.

NACo supports county planning and land use policies that contemplate growth and development patterns occurring within a county and the surrounding region. Recognizing that land use decisions are inherently local in nature, NACo strongly supports county government decision-making that appropriately reflects the county's needs in accommodating growth, as well as the will of county residents.

B. Housing Element in the Local Plan: Counties should prepare and adopt housing elements as part of their comprehensive plans. This housing component should include projections of present and future housing needs, and take into account land zoned for different types of lot sizes, types of housing (including manufactured housing), and different income levels. In addition, it should set realistic annual goals for the number of units or persons to receive housing assistance and make provision for the public facilities. The housing element should be coordinated with all other related plans supportive to the housing element such as utilities, human services programs, open space, recreation, trails, schools, churches, commercial areas, agriculture, transportation, and other community services and facilities.

1
2 **C. Local Land Use Policies and Procedures:** Zoning, subdivision regulations, timing of
3 development, and permitting procedures have a direct, although not the major, impact on the cost
4 of housing. Recognizing, therefore, that county government can contribute, at least in part, to
5 stemming increases in housing costs, NACo recommends the following policies:

6
7 **1. Inclusionary Zoning:** Incentives such as inclusionary zoning and density bonuses
8 should be enacted to expand affordable housing.
9

10 **2. Permitting Processes:** Legislation enacted by states or local governments involving
11 zoning, subdivision regulation, or environmental protection, and their implementing
12 regulations, should be reviewed regularly for consistency to reduce duplication, achieve
13 simplicity (including those areas where regional qualification and criteria are necessary), and
14 clarity.
15

16 The number of permits required for development should be reduced through consolidation of
17 overlapping regulations. Intra-governmental and intergovernmental consolidation of
18 hearings and interchange ability of approvals (or at least interchangeability of information
19 requirements) can reduce delay while maintaining opportunities for public involvement.
20

21 Local governments should require that on-site improvements exclusively benefiting the home
22 buyer be included as part of development costs. On and off-site improvements benefiting a
23 population larger than the development should be shared between the developer and the
24 community.
25

26 Counties should prepare housing and building permit registries which describe requirements,
27 procedures, and regulations in specific terms. Application forms should be consolidated
28 and/or standardized. Criteria for determination of application completeness should be
29 developed and published. Preliminary conferences should be held with developers
30 (particularly small or inexperienced ones) to assure that requirements, procedures, and
31 regulations are clearly understood, and an early determination of application completeness
32 should be made. Local governments should consider using a zoning hearing examiner as a
33 way of reducing development processing time.
34

35 NACo commends the Department on its commitment to reducing regulatory barriers.
36 However, it must be noted that zoning and land use decision making is an inherently local
37 process, subject to a range of influences including market forces, citizen input and political
38 realities. Moreover, there is a concern that some communities without the capacity to
39 undertake technical or personnel changes necessary to implement practices that streamline
40 permitting and zoning processes may lose important federal resources. Regardless, local
41 governments are deeply committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing, and agree
42 that steps can be taken to reduce regulatory barriers.
43

44 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

45 **A. County Role in Economic Development:** County officials should exercise strong
46 leadership in creating a supportive environment for business investment by: promoting
47 diversified economies; creating, rehabilitating and maintaining support infrastructure; providing
48 quality education and training; and involving the non-profit and private sectors. Economic
49 development efforts benefit counties through the retention and creation of jobs, the broadening of
50 county tax bases, and the improvement of the overall quality of life. States governments should
51 develop policies supporting new business development, business retention and business

expansion. They should implement coordinated processes that involve county governments in providing the infrastructure and financial incentives to promote economic development.

1. Economic Development Planning and Resource Development: County governments should adopt economic development as a high priority. These efforts should: support public education and vocational and on-the-job training; focus on government assistance recipients, displaced workers, unemployed and underemployed individuals, disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, women and minority populations and veterans; and appropriately involve community groups and other special purpose organizations.

Counties should design and implement comprehensive economic development plans that include short range and long range goals in response to local and regional needs. These plans should guide growth, development and redevelopment. Counties should encourage the participation of city governments, public agencies, utilities and the private sector in the formulation of economic development plans. County economic development plans should generate innovative financial strategies that leverage private investment through public-private partnerships.

2. Land Use: Locally adopted land use plans and zoning ordinances should serve as the basis for determining the best locations for economic development and redevelopment activities. These policies and plans should be sensitive to the needs for balanced growth. Plans and policies should strive to maintain the variety and quality of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, and preserve the environment and areas of historic and cultural significance.

3. Small and Medium Business Development: Counties must work with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and state and local financial institutions to develop and provide other sources of capital—i.e., grants and loans—to assure the availability of funds for small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Whether the need be legal, financial or marketing expertise, counties should disseminate information, and aggressively market services that are available and evaluate the effectiveness of these services. As a component of these efforts, counties should work with the private sector in facilitating the creation and expansion of minority- and women-owned business enterprises, and promote the development of small and medium sized businesses.

To encourage the commercialization of technologies developed by small businesses, county governments should work closely with universities, community colleges, business groups, chambers of commerce and federal, state and municipal governments. Counties should strive to identify firms that export products and services to national and/or international markets, and those that have the potential to export to national and international markets.

4. Commemorative Projects: NACo supports county projects such as the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, which will foster an open, continuous dialogue on the subject of freedom and commemorate the cooperation, courage and extraordinary heroism of enslaved Americans who sought for freedom, and those who assisted them in the pursuit of that goal. NACo encourages counties to recognize and commemorate the commitment of individuals whose acts exemplify the American spirit of liberty and justice for all.

5. New and Small Business Development: New and Small Business Development: Counties should work with entrepreneurs and small businesses to foster innovation and take

1 advantage of new and untapped business opportunities in their local and regional
2 communities. This support would include: hosting and participating in local and regional
3 conferences; working with other entities to provide access to business planning resources,
4 mentors and advisory networks, and financing opportunities.

5
6 NACo encourages state and federal governments to provide incentives that support
7 entrepreneurs and small business growth. Counties should work to bolster the development
8 of entrepreneurial and business talent within their communities and emphasize the expansion
9 and retention of local businesses.

10
11 **B. The Federal Role in Economic Development:** NACo supports federal programs--including
12 EDA, SBA, and USDA Rural Development--that recognize the importance of a federal role in
13 state and local economic development, and provide funding resources, bonds, information, and
14 technical assistance to further this important role.

15
16 **1. Clean Up and Redevelopment of Brownfields:** The federal government should provide
17 incentives for counties to identify and remediate contaminated, abandoned or substantially
18 underutilized industrial and commercial land—i.e., brownfields—as a catalyst for
19 redevelopment of economically distressed areas. NACo supports legislation to authorize a
20 federal brownfields program that includes enhanced funding for counties.

21
22 NACo urges that a portion of EPA funds be used for revolving loans for cleanup activities, as
23 well as for site assessments. HUD and EDA funds should be used for planning projected uses
24 and redevelopment of sites. Local governments should be given flexibility in determining
25 appropriate uses. HUD funds for brownfields should be freestanding, as opposed to a set-
26 aside out of CDBG funding. NACo supports the use of Superfund Trust Fund monies by
27 EPA, with funds—preferably grants rather than loans—directly allocated to local governments
28 for site assessments and brownfield site cleanups.

29
30 NACo supports cleanup programs operated by states for brownfield sites, yet urges that state
31 programs be required to operate in conformity with existing minimum federal standards and
32 guidelines. Counties should have the authority to request that EPA list a brownfield site on
33 the Superfund national priorities list if, in the process of assessing a site, the county
34 determines that it is more toxic than originally estimated.

35
36 Brownfields are abandoned or underutilized commercial and industrial sites that have
37 environmental contamination issues related to their previous uses, yet are potential resources
38 for community economic revitalization. Counties must be protected from liability for
39 potential future environmental problems related to inadequately cleaned-up brownfields.

40
41 Many brownfield sites remain underutilized because no funds are available either to assess
42 the presence and extent of contamination, or to clean up environmental hazards. Federal
43 resources are essential for assessment and remediation, as well as to provide incentives for
44 private investment. Flexibility in the types of federal assistance is critical because
45 brownfield sites vary in their marketability, the magnitude of redevelopment activities
46 necessary to attract investors, the type of private investment, and the projected rate of return
47 to the investor.

48
49 Brownfields exist in rural as well as urban and suburban counties. Redevelopment is one
50 component of a broader interest by counties in achieving sustainable development on a
51 regional basis and for reducing urban sprawl. Redevelopment of these abandoned or

underutilized sites can stimulate economic revitalization in the surrounding areas, and preserve green space by providing an alternative to unchecked urban sprawl.

2. Superfund Program: NACo opposes the reduction of funding to the Superfund program, which provides for the assessment and cleanup of hazardous waste at contaminated and abandoned industrial sites. NACo supports full funding of federal programs that provide for the assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields sites. The adaptive reuse of brownfield sites will help revitalize distressed areas in communities, and NACo opposes any reduction of funding for the Superfund program that would limit or diminish the effectiveness of federal, state or local efforts towards the revitalization of brownfields sites.

3. Sustainable Communities: NACo supports legislation that will encourage agencies at the federal and regional levels to integrate housing, transit energy and environmental planning to support sustainable development that makes the most efficient use of existing transportation and other infrastructure. NACo promotes future transportation and infrastructure - including water, sewer, and broadband- to maximize economic growth and the quality of life in a region while minimizing traffic congestion, environmental impacts, and energy use in urban, suburban, exurban and rural areas.

4. Emerging Markets: Congress has passed emerging new markets and renewal communities legislation. NACo supports efforts to open new markets in economically underserved areas, and supports private sector investment in untapped markets. Investments should be focused especially on emerging minority-owned and operated businesses in order to address real growth in both the geographic and commercial potentials of underserved markets and their communities.

Certain sectors have not been targeted in promoting increased marketing and availability for business expansion despite having the necessary population and skilled workforce. Improving access to capital for low- wealth households, minority populations and traditionally underserved borrowers, by bringing private enterprise into underserved neighborhoods and communities, should be encouraged.

5. Infrastructure and Public Works: Counties must provide and support sufficient infrastructure and support services to generate increased economic activity. To sustain and increase economic activity in counties, federal, state and municipal governments must assist in the rehabilitation and expansion of physical infrastructure and support services, including multimodal transportation, power utilities, broadband, water treatment and waste management systems, and natural gas distribution infrastructure. Changes in federal regulations have affected the cost of providing infrastructure capacity significantly, and counties must work to ensure balanced regulations that protect the environment, without unreasonably increased costs. NACo strongly supports:

- a national commitment, shared by all levels of government and the private sector, to increase capital spending;
- more flexible administration of federal and state mandates to allow cost-effective methods of compliance;
- accelerated spending of the federal highway, transit, aviation and waterways trust funds;
- prioritization of rehabilitation and improvement of aging infrastructure that negatively affects business retention and attraction in older regions and communities;

- removal of unwarranted limits on the ability of state and local governments to help themselves through tax-exempt financing and incentives, such as empowerment zones; and
- funding the Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D).

6. The New Homestead Economic Opportunity Act: NACo urges Congress to pass the New Homestead Act to strengthen rural counties suffering from high rates of outmigration.

7. Middle Market Companies: NACo supports sound policies that enhance access to capital and reduce redundant regulations to allow middle market companies to thrive and support economic recovery across the United States.

8. Challenges and Local Impacts of Base Closure: The adverse economic impacts of military base closures and realignments are devastating for small or rural communities and metropolitan areas. Immediate effects include a loss of civilian and military jobs, an erosion of the tax base, increased local government costs in providing services to the base, the presence of substandard buildings and infrastructure that may fail to meet local codes, a decline in real estate values which can trigger a drop in property tax revenue, and adverse impacts on banks when homeowners are unable to pay their mortgages.

a. Federal Oversight of Base Closures: Efficient conversion of closed bases to productive civilian uses requires the coordinated effort of several departments of the federal government. Conflicting missions within the Department of Defense (DoD) and among other federal departments and agencies have slowed the base reuse process and added to the difficulties communities face.

- Congress and DoD have made unrealistic estimates of the profits that the federal government will receive from reuse of closed installations. As a result, the conversion process is delayed, because base commanders often are forced to make economically unrealistic demands in the sale or lease of base facilities, or commanders fail to exercise their interim leasing authority, and instead relinquish their authority to leasing agencies.
- An Assistant Secretary of Defense should be appointed whose primary responsibilities are to ensure rapid conversion of facilities and economic development. This senior official must have the authority and responsibility to administer base closure activities for the three branches of the military and coordinate actions taken by federal departments and agencies that impact conversions. This official should engage in continuing dialogue with affected communities and provide a forum for communities to bring grievances, resolve disputes, and assure consistency in the interpretation and implementation of the same law. This office also would serve as a vital clearinghouse of best practices in the event that additional base closures are authorized in the future.
- The Secretary of Defense should provide clear orders through the service secretaries to all commanders of installations designated for closure that their primary mission is to facilitate swift civilian reuse of the installation while minimizing adverse impacts on the community. Base commanders should be encouraged to enter into leases as they are authorized to do.

b. Economic Adjustment Assistance: To maximize the fiscal benefit of base closure, the federal government must assist in the rehabilitation of substandard base facilities and

1 provide creative financing terms to purchasers or developers of closed bases. Economic
2 Adjustment Assistance, from the Office of Economic Adjustment or the President's
3 Economic Adjustment Committee, is absolutely necessary. Such funding should be
4 available for reuse planning, as well as for special projects on a discretionary basis and
5 for preparing strategic marketing plans including development, printing and distribution
6 of marketing materials.

7
8 "Bridge funding," to enable communities to assume responsibility for large airfields and
9 other military facilities with civilian uses, should continue for several years after closure
10 until the facilities can begin to generate revenue. To preserve taxpayer investment in
11 these assets, facilities should be maintained, and equipment that is essential for their
12 functioning should remain intact for long-term economic development following
13 conversion. To assist with economic stimulus, the federal government along with state
14 governments should enter into joint marketing agreements with local governments to
15 promote development of these properties.

16
17 Continued support for projects related to base closure through EDA remains important.
18 Affected local governments should be eligible for federal dollars that can be used for
19 local priorities, including making loans or grants to businesses that utilize former bases.
20 Any loan repayments should go into a revolving loan fund for use by local governments
21 in financing additional conversion activities.

22
23 DoD must explore alternative methods to finance the transfer of bases out of federal
24 ownership and the development of new, productive uses on the property. Financing often
25 can be provided without expense to the federal government by extending the time period
26 during which an installment purchase of a facility must be paid. Coordinating the
27 disposition and reuse plans with funding available through other federal departments,
28 such as Labor and Transportation, will allow the federal government to obtain a greater
29 overall, long-term value for closed bases while mitigating adverse local impacts.

30
31 The introduction of Economic Development Conveyances (EDCs) in recent years has
32 been an innovative and important step in facilitating more expedient redevelopment. No-
33 cost EDCs have been of particular importance to rural communities that lack the
34 resources to buy base property for redevelopment. The further step in 1999 to both
35 expand no-cost EDCs to all communities and to allow communities experiencing
36 changed economic circumstances to renegotiate earlier EDC agreements has been integral
37 in many reuse projects moving forward. DoD must continue to develop creative
38 strategies such as this to help communities cope with base closure.

39
40 NACo urges the following:

- 41
42
- 43 • Allow local reuse authorities to issue tax-exempt industrial development bonds, to
44 serve as business incentives and provide financial support to local closure
45 authorities during the conversion phase.
 - 46 • Closing military bases should be made foreign trade zones and federal
47 empowerment zones with the associated tax advantages and investment credits to
48 enable them to attract private investment.
 - 49 • Any national infrastructure finance program, such as the GROW AMERICA
50 ACT, should set aside funds for infrastructure improvements on former military
installations.

1
2 **c. Property Transfer:** The design and implementation of a review and transfer process
3 that is consistent among the operating branches within DoD are imperative. This process
4 needs to be responsive to community reuse objectives and provide prompt transfer of
5 property to accomplish early economic recovery.
6

- 7 • Interim leases should be longer than one year so that the local governing entity is
8 better positioned to recruit private businesses and should be processed within
9 sixty [60] days as the law requires.
- 10 • DoD should act swiftly to implement P.L. 102-426. This law requires prompt
11 identification, parcelization, and transfer of uncontaminated parcels of base
12 property.
- 13 • Negotiated sales of base property should require Congressional review only if
14 valued at a fair market value of \$1 million or more. Current law requires
15 Congressional review for sales worth \$100,000 or more.
- 16 • In developing reuse plans, communities should take into consideration the needs
17 of all citizens, including the homeless living in the vicinity, in deciding the most
18 appropriate use of the property. Federal preference for use of the base by
19 homeless providers, however, should in no way delay the planning process.
20 Instead, local redevelopment authorities should assist interested groups in
21 evaluating property at the base, consult with representatives of homeless people,
22 and take their proposed uses into account in developing a reuse plan.
- 23 • DoD should reexamine the policy that precludes the demolition of buildings prior
24 to transferring bases. Many buildings are unusable, for example, because they
25 contain asbestos, or do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and
26 state and local building codes.
- 27 • Interim agreements should give local governments preference in exercising their
28 police power—i.e., zoning ordinances and building regulations—and rendering
29 caretaker services. The federal government should reimburse local governments
30 for maintenance costs.
31

32 **d. Environmental Cleanup:** Environmental contamination on bases must be cleaned to
33 a standard that protects human health, and also permits the reuse of the facility in
34 accordance with locally generated, legally defensible land use plans without the local
35 agencies or private sector having to incur additional cleanup costs in order to reuse the
36 facility.
37

38 Local jurisdictions must have the opportunity to be active participants in all phases of
39 environmental cleanup, including evaluation of site conditions and selection and
40 implementation of remediation programs. The timetable for environmental impact
41 statements, parcelization and prioritization should be coordinated with civilian reuse
42 plans.
43

44 A federal finance bank could be authorized to purchase federally guaranteed bonds to be
45 issued by communities for local acquisition of closing base facilities and for upgrade of
46 the property with minimal down payments and at low interest rates.
47

48 **e. Job Retraining:** The Dislocated Workers and Trade Adjustment Assistance Act
49 administered under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) currently serves displaced
50 workers including those displaced due to defense downsizing. WIA programs should

continue to be utilized as a framework for any new comprehensive retraining program for dislocated workers.

f. Support for Non-Base Federal Installations: Appropriate support for reinvestment and economic redevelopment should be made available to communities impacted by the closure or significant downsizing of other non-base federal installations, such as national laboratories, enrichment facilities and other DoD and Department of Energy facilities.

9. Trade Agreements: NACo supports free trade activities that enhance the economic base of local governments and promote county participation in the global economy. NACo, however, opposes the adjudication of disputes arising out of trade agreements in a manner that preempts local government authority, circumvents domestic judicial processes, and grants greater rights to foreign investors than those guaranteed to U.S. citizens by federal, state, and local law.

NACo urges Congress to review and create a report card on existing and new Free Trade Agreements to determine their effects on U.S. manufacturing industries, workers and agriculture, and to send the report back to NACo as soon as possible.

10. State Role in Economic Growth: States are urged to involve counties and other local governments as full partners in planning and implementing statewide economic development strategies. Where authorized by law, states should work with county governments in the allocation of tax-exempt bond authority and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits in order to achieve equitable distribution of these tools throughout the state. States should consider appropriate legislation that would provide a sound method for acquiring land for future public urban, suburban, exurban and rural development uses.

11. Regional Economic Development Commissions: NACo supports the concept of regional economic development commissions, which would facilitate comprehensive and cooperative approaches to economic and infrastructure development in severely distressed counties, provided that funding for such commissions is not at the expense of funding for traditional economic development programs, such as Economic Development Districts.

12. Trade Assistance: NACo supports the concept of trade adjustment assistance for local governments. Many communities may experience a negative change in the local economy as the US marketplace becomes increasingly global. NACo believes that federal resources should be allocated to help alleviate the negative impacts of expanded trade practices, and help communities devise strategies for future economic viability.

13. International Economic Development and Offshore Manufacturing: Economic development is a key issue for many counties across the nation, and with high unemployment still in existence, jobs are a priority. Too many companies however are moving from one state to another without a net increase to the overall U.S. economy. NACo continues to urge the federal government to encourage businesses to move manufacturing back to the states from offshore. This can be done through a variety of incentives. NACo is open to working with the federal and county governments to find the right way to incentivize this initiative.

WORKFORCE

STATEMENT OF BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The National Association of Counties (NACo) believes that county governments have a critical role to play in the planning, management and implementation of employment programs designed to prepare people for the world of work and to help ensure employers have a skilled workforce. Therefore, NACo supports the following principles.

- **Local Authority:** The federal government should not usurp or undermine the authorities, responsibilities and obligations that are generally reserved to states and localities with respect to workforce programs.
- **Workforce Development:** The federal, state, and local governments must work together to maintain an effective national workforce development system which addresses the workforce needs of job seekers including youth, incumbent workers, and employers; aligns the appropriate resources; and is designed, governed, and implemented by a public-private partnership made up of local elected officials and business leaders.
- **Labor-Management Relations:** County governments should continue to pursue positive labor-management relations in order to ensure that counties provide their workers with safe and meaningful employment and county workers contribute to the overall goals and objectives of the county for which they work.

LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Constitution of the U.S. sets out those responsibilities specifically given to the federal government and those retained by the states and the people. County governments are partners with the federal government and states in providing important programs and services to the American people. When appropriate, the federal government should legislate on the labor, employment and workforce development needs of the nation. However, the federal government should refrain from pre-empting those aspects of labor law that remain the responsibility and obligation of states and local governments.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A skilled workforce is essential for the economic success of the nation's employers. Thus, NACo strongly supports efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the national workforce development system. NACo believes that workforce programs can be strengthened and better aligned to improve access and service delivery for both workers and employers through a streamlined national workforce development system funded by the federal government through formula-based block grants to states and passed through to localities which provides flexibility to local governments to adapt to local needs. The alignment of these resources should be decided by state and local officials and business leaders working through Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs).

Goals: The principal goals of the national workforce development system should be to enhance business and economic development, reduce local unemployment rates, increase local workforce participation rates, enhance incomes, work with youth on career awareness and ensure that all individuals obtain appropriate wages.

Access and Flexibility: Access to workforce development programs should be universal without respect to economic circumstance, gender, race, ethnicity, or national origin. Local governments should have the authority to implement these programs and to determine the range of services provided and the priority populations that should receive these services. Particularly during times of rapidly changing economic conditions, local elected officials must have the authority and flexibility to bring resources together at the grassroots level to best serve citizen

1 and employer needs. NACo believes this alignment can only effectively occur with local elected
2 officials at city and county levels.

3
4 NACo also encourages the federal government to provide a stable funding mechanism to make
5 available long-term skills training for every worker dislocated due to industry shut downs and
6 businesses that relocate off shore.

7
8 Local workforce development areas and states should be granted broad waiver authority to
9 creatively respond to the employment, education and training, economic development and
10 welfare issues confronting states and localities. Requests for waivers should be developed
11 jointly by local elected officials and WIBS, and must receive the approval of state agencies and
12 /or governors before they can be enacted.

13
14 The federal government should not grant new waiver requests or approve state Workforce
15 Investment Act (WIA) plans that do not include the proper input or the process of consultation
16 with local elected officials and local WIBs as required under law. Furthermore, the Department
17 of Labor should not approve any state WIA plan submitted by a governor that circumvents
18 federal laws and/or consolidates or eliminates any local workforce areas without demonstrated
19 rationale (e.g. fraud, or lack of performance). Additionally, in both examples meaningful input
20 and support from a majority of local elected officials should be required. NACo further urges
21 the federal government to uphold a state's current WIA plan in the event a state governor
22 subsequently submits a plan which is contrary to the intent, policy and procedures of the
23 Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or future workforce reauthorization legislation.

24
25 **Administration:** Workforce development programs should be developed, implemented, and
26 overseen at the city, county or multi-county levels by city or county elected officials and local
27 WIBs. The latter should be appointed by the chief local elected official or officials for the local
28 workforce investment area based upon recommendations from representatives of the business
29 community, and should be comprised mainly of business community representatives. Regardless
30 of population, counties and cities or consortia of counties and cities with histories of effective
31 workforce development activities should be eligible for automatic designation.

32
33 County governments should have the flexibility, through their local planning process and in
34 cooperation with local WIBs, to merge Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
35 programs and local WIA programs into a single entity.

36
37 The national workforce development system should integrate and streamline the disparate
38 federal, state and local training and employment programs into a more aligned and reduced set of
39 funding streams whose services are delivered through a locally established and governed one-
40 stop delivery system. Mandatory partners within the one stop delivery system should be required
41 to contribute to infrastructure and other costs related operations of the one-stops. These
42 contributions can be direct and also can included local, state and federal resources.

43 44 **Federal Government Role:**

- 45 • The federal and state governments should not operate training and employment programs
46 or provide direct client services that are duplicative of those offered under the Wagner-
47 Peyser Act.
- 48 • The federal government should interpret federal law through regulations and when
49 necessary arbitrate disagreements between state and local officials.

- It should supply sufficient resources to ensure that states and localities are able to achieve the goals and objectives of the law.
- Funding across the states and workforce development programs should be equitable and based upon a formula that reflects state and local fiscal needs.
- The Department of Labor should allocate as much funding as possible to local workforce service areas.
- New federal training and employment programs, additional funding or additional program guidance should be done as part of the formula-based block grant program, and should retain and utilize existing governance structures to avoid program duplication and confusion.
- Take a reasonable and uniform approach to performance standard negotiations.

State Government Role: State governments in partnership with local WIBs, should develop plans and strategies that address the states' broader economic goals and align state resources to support local delivery of programs and services.

States should have a limited, but important role in the delivery of workforce development services. States should:

- Provide local labor market information;
- Provide technical assistance and guidance;
- Develop a statewide workforce development plan that can guide local workforce development areas as they develop their plans;
- Provide capacity building services;
- Develop, operate, and support a statewide information management system; and
- Develop performance standards that may be used as the basis for rewards to or sanctions of local workforce development programs.

Local Roles:

- Local workforce areas should be given the authority to develop programs that meet the needs of job seekers including youth, employers and employees alike. This should include the flexibility to develop sector-based, incumbent worker, and other specialized training services that respond to local economic development policies and business needs.
- Local workforce programs should assist structurally and cyclically unemployed individuals acquire marketable job skills that lead to employment and economic self-sufficiency; young people obtain those skills necessary to make the transition to work; and business and industry meet their needs for qualified and skilled workers.
- Local workforce programs should be permitted to provide public sector employment during periods of high unemployment or long-term unemployment.
- Local workforce development programs should maintain high standards of accountability, fiscal management and include "return on investment" and "customer satisfaction" strategies as well as appropriate regression models to determine program benefits and ensure that special populations are adequately and effectively served.
- Local elected officials and local WIBs should be given the authorities needed to ensure that these programs maintain high standards of accountability and responsibility.
- Develop the local workforce development plan and programs.
- Establish and oversee the one-stop career center system within their workforce development area.

Structurally, at a minimum, local WIBs should:

- Be comprised of a majority of representatives of the private sector;
- Be chaired by a representative of the private sector;
- Involve public partners

Local Elected Official Roles: Each local workforce development area should be under the direction of one or more local elected officials and a local workforce development board appointed by local elected officials. At a minimum, local elected officials should:

- Appoint and certify local workforce development boards;
- Participate in the development and approval of local workforce development plans and programs in partnership with local WIBS;
- Approve all grant recipients including those designated to provide one-stop system services;
- Oversee and evaluate all workforce development and one-stop system programs in partnership with the local WIBs; and
- Manage fiscal resources, in cooperation with the local WIB.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

A. Collective Bargaining: NACo opposes national legislation that would require states and localities to bargain collectively. Each state legislature should decide this issue based upon local conditions and circumstances. NACo urges all state legislatures to enact labor-management legislation that would:

- Grant public employees the right to organize and freely choose their representatives;
- Require public employers to meet and negotiate with public employees through their bargaining unit;
- Protect the rights of public employers, public employees, and the public at-large;
- Cover all permanent, non-supervisory employees of state and local governments;
- Exclude temporary, supervisory, managerial, confidential and elected employees;
- Grant public employees the right to bargain collectively for wages, hours, fringe benefits, and related conditions of employment;
- Establish procedural mechanisms that ensure that the broadest and most comprehensive bargaining unit is identified through secret ballots, under adequate supervision that can address impasses;
- Prohibit strikes but provides for reasonable means to resolve disputes; and
- Grant localities the right to pass appropriate ordinances in the absence of state laws.

B. Equal Employment Opportunity: NACo believes that county governments have a vital and continuing interest in the development, maintenance, and extension of vigorous and effective civil rights policies within the workplace. Therefore, counties are:

- Enforcing and applying all laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age;
- Removing all barriers to the recruitment, selection, hiring, compensation, provision of pensions and benefits, promotion, transfer, or discharge of employees that have no relationship to job requirements;
- Developing and carrying out affirmative action programs for minority groups, disabled persons, and women; and

- Establishing employment programs that benefit disadvantaged county residents.

NACo supports equal pay for equal work and urges all counties to undertake a thorough review of their various job classifications and pay scales to ensure that they are equitable, justifiable, and fairly account for positions historically dominated by women.

C. Occupational Safety and Health: NACo supports efforts to establish state and local occupational safety and health standards. However, states should retain the ability to set their own occupational health and safety standards tailored to the needs of their jurisdiction.

D. Fair Labor Standards Act: NACo supports future amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act that would recognize the unique working conditions of all public safety employees, including dual function employees such as firefighter/paramedics employed by a public agency but not connected to a fire department.

E. Davis-Bacon: The Davis-Bacon Act was designed to ensure that workers on federally-subsidized construction projects receive the prevailing wage for a specific construction job whether they are part of a union or not. NACo believes that federal implementation of the Davis-Bacon Act has been problematic at the local level, specifically with respect to reporting requirements for sub-contractors working on a federally funded, local construction project.

Therefore, NACo recommends to Congress to make the following reforms to the Davis-Bacon Act:

- Determination of the prevailing wage should be based upon a 50 percent or majority rule, rather than the current 30 percent rule;
- Allow state and local governments to employ “helpers” in the same ratio used in non-Davis-Bacon Act construction;
- Utilize county boundaries or MSA, generally, when determining local wage rates, and prohibit the use of urban wage data in rural areas, and vice versa;
- Raise the \$2,000 threshold to \$500,000, and index this threshold based upon the consumer price index; and
- Waive Davis-Bacon regulations in states where there are state established labor rates for public construction projects.

Approved | July 14, 2014

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution to Increase Accessibility to Veterans’ Services

Issue: County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) need to be embedded in every county in the U.S. to serve a critical role to assist veterans’ and families’ access their earned benefits and services nationally and locally.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges the Administration and Congress to include and designate VA funding for future federal fiscal years to counties to support CVSO offices throughout the nation’s local county governments.

Approved | July 14, 2014

1
2 **Resolution on FY 2015 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban**
3 **Development**

4
5 **Issue:** Support FY 2015 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
6 Development (HUD).

7
8 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to support the
9 following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
10 programs in the FY 2015 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development appropriations
11 bill: no less than \$3.3 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula
12 funding; no less than \$1.2 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships
13 Program (HOME); \$2.1 billion for Homeless Housing Assistance grants, including at least \$250
14 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring
15 supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Section
16 8 project-based and tenant-based contracts and \$500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee
17 authority.

18
19 In addition, NACo opposes the imposition of a funding threshold to receive CDBG formula
20 funds directly or elimination of “grandfathering” provisions which allow cities and counties to
21 maintain their entitlement status. NACo also does not support diverting CDBG formula funds to
22 other categorical grant programs.

23
24 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

25
26 **Resolution Supporting Reauthorization and Appropriations for the U.S. Department of**
27 **Commerce’s Economic Development Administration**

28
29 **Issue:** Appropriations and reauthorization legislation for the U.S. Department of Commerce’s
30 Economic Development Administration (EDA)

31
32 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges Congress to support reauthorization and appropriations for the
33 Department of Commerce’s EDA to keep communities strong and economically viable at a time
34 when our nation needs it the most.

35
36 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

37
38 **Resolution Supporting Permanent Authorization for the EB-5 Regional Center Program**

39
40 **Issue:** The EB-5 Regional Center Program (the “Program”) authorization expires on September
41 30, 2015.

42
43 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports federal legislation to
44 permanently authorize the EB-5 Regional Center Program and to maximize its capacity for
45 economic impact and job creation.

46
47 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

48
49 **Resolution Supporting the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

50
51 **Issue:** The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is currently being negotiated by the

European Union and the United States of America.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the approval of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) by the Administration and ratification by the U.S. Senate.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Reauthorization of Federal Workforce Legislation

Issue: Reauthorization of Federal Workforce Legislation

Adopted Policy: NACo supports federal reauthorization workforce legislation which promotes innovation and flexibility at the state and local level, is responsive to local emerging economic realities and business needs, and ensures U.S. workers and businesses have the skills and training needed to compete in the 21st century economy. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) embraces these goals.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution to Pursue Rules during Implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to Allow for Expanded Use of Incumbent Worker Training Funds

Issue: H.R. 803 (referred to as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) was approved on July 9, 2014 and limits local workforce investment boards abilities to use incumbent worker training funds to specific purposes.

Adopted Policy: As part of the implementation of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which was passed by the House on July 9, 2014, pursue rules that would authorize the use of incumbent worker training dollars for training programs to assist in economic development purposes whereby existing employees may receive training that would upgrade their skills (as passed WIOA allows for training programs to “to retain employment or avert layoffs”).

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Infrastructure Funding for Local One-Stop Career Centers

Issue: Dedicated infrastructure funding for local One-Stop Career Centers.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports providing dedicated infrastructure funding for the facilities and operations of Local One-Stop Career Centers.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging Congress to Address the Minimum Wage

Issue: The federal minimum wage standard has not increased while the cost of living has gone up resulting in financial distress on members of our communities.

1 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to adopt
2 legislation addressing the minimum wage in all sectors of the economy.
3

4 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

5
6 **Resolution Supporting the Reauthorization of Export-Import Bank of the United States**
7

8 **Issue:** The Congress of the United States of America is in the process of reauthorizing the
9 Export-Import Bank of the United States of America in this session of the Congress and seeks
10 the input of the National Association of Counties and our International Economic Development
11 Task Force. Congress takes up reauthorization on July 7, 2014.
12

13 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) support, endorse and advocate
14 for the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank of the United States. NACo encourages each
15 and every county in the United States of America and all 50 states and 4 territories to support,
16 endorse and advocate for the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank of the United States of
17 America.
18

19 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND LAND USE STEERING COMMITTEE

PLATFORM CHANGES

Clean Water Act Section 404 Permitting

Under WATER QUALITY

D. Wetlands Permitting and Navigable Waters: NACo supports the national policy goal of net gain/no net loss of wetlands and encourages a management approach that avoids wetlands, minimizes wetland loss, and mitigates as the final alternative. NACo supports additional federal funding for local governments to implement the national policy goal.

NACo supports a requirement to offset unavoidable wetland loss by mitigating, restoring through enhancement of existing wetlands, or creating new wetlands, when public need requires that public facilities, utilities, or improvements be developed over sensitive ecological areas.

NACo supports clarification of federal law to permit the proper maintenance of drainage systems according to the original intent and design of the law and to federal and state regulations established prior to 1985. Land designated as agricultural land prior to 1985 should not require restoration to conditions prior to agricultural use.

NACo supports keeping the terms navigable and/or navigable waters in the Clean Water Act to protect intrastate waters, including wetland habitats, rivers, and streams within the United States and to protect the basic, fundamental principles of local land use control in accordance with the goals of the CWA. NACo will oppose any effort to remove the term “navigable” from the CWA.

NACo calls on the federal government to clarify that local streets, gutters, and human-made ditches are excluded from the definition of "waters of the United States." Further, NACo urges the federal government to recognize that the flow volume of stormwater from development and regulation of impervious surfaces are local land use issues, and are not subject to federal regulation.

NACo urges the federal government to improve the CWA §404 permit process by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps); remove routine maintenance of human-made public flood protection facilities and infrastructure from the §404 permit process when no endangered species habitat are present; and extend the (CWA) general permit term for routine maintenance from five to ten years.

NACo supports using pesticides in accordance with the instructions on the label, and supports strong penalties for those who misuse pesticides in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). NACo opposes any legislation that expands the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) jurisdiction in regard to pesticide use in (and around) county-owned and operated streets, gutters, and ditches.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Clean-Up of Marine Debris

Under WATER QUALITY

1 **H. Oceans and Coastal:** NACo supports federal funding for continued education and scientific
2 study of ocean acidification.

3
4 NACo supports focused dialogue and collaboration between counties and the U.S. military to
5 continue to improve maritime practices and to mitigate sonar impacts to marine mammals,
6 fisheries, local economies, and natural resources.

7
8 NACo supports federal efforts to address the increasing problem of marine debris. This includes,
9 but is not limited to: support for continued reauthorization of the Marine Debris Research,
10 Prevention, and Reduction Act (MDRPRA) and/or similar legislation and increased funding to
11 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide additional resources
12 for grants to coastal counties for beach cleanup efforts, derelict fishing gear removal; research on
13 the effectiveness of off-shore clean-up methods; and federal policies that encourage states and
14 localities to educate small business communities and consumers about the significant
15 environmental harm of single-use plastic bags/bottles and the benefits of associated county-wide
16 bans and additionally encouraging reuse/recycle policies at the local level.

17
18 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

19 20 **Issuance of Oil and Gas Permits**

21 22 **Under ENERGY**

23
24 **A. National Energy Policy:** NACo seeks a comprehensive and integrated approach to a
25 national energy policy that:

- 26
- 27 • Balances increased domestic oil and gas production on public and privately-owned lands,
28 including issuance of oil and gas drilling permits in a timely fashion;
 - 29 • Provides states and counties, which support and encourage oil and gas production off their
30 shores, with a share of revenues proportionate to the royalties generated;
 - 31 • Accelerates development, research and incentives for alternative and renewable energy, clean
32 energy, energy efficient programs, and clean coal technologies;
 - 33 • Gives local governments a central role in formulating local environment, energy and land use
34 policies;
 - 35 • Supports environmental equity issues;
 - 36 • Continues energy conservation programs that reduce consumption, encourage efficient
37 energy use, and improve end use efficiencies;
 - 38 • Preserves and protects ecologically unique areas;
 - 39 • Provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the problems of communities affected by
40 new energy resource facility development, and direct participation by local governments in
41 all strategy development for mitigating any adverse consequences of a new energy resource
42 facility;
 - 43 • Provides federal funding through grants, payments, low-interest loans, and loan guarantees,
44 to counties and other local governments to help fund the planning and development of public
45 facilities, and services, required as the result of new or expanded energy resource and facility
46 development; and
 - 47 • Provides funding for Native American energy resource development.
- 48

49 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution on Improving Water Quality Planning through Regional Watershed(s) Protection

Issue: Effective water quality management efforts can be accomplished through regional watershed(s) protection.

Adopted Policy: NACo recommends increased funding for water quality and wastewater management projects at the regional watershed(s) planning level as dictated through Section 208 of the Clean Water Act of 1972 through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and grants.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Affordable and Reliable Energy

Issue: Adequate analysis of the cost/benefit of regulations and legislation related to the use of coal as an electricity source is continually necessary.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to re-evaluate restrictions on the mining, transportation and burning of coal. NACo believes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's existing and proposed rules, regulations and standards should be further studied to fully understand the costs and benefits on electric utility operations, electricity availability and capacity, electric rates; the economic impacts to manufacturers, the economic and health impacts to communities and consumers.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Promoting a Level Playing Field for Certified Forest Products in Green Buildings

Issue: Green building policies that only reward the use of forest products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), in effect favor foreign timber over domestic timber certified by credible organizations such as the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

Adopted Policy: NACo urges the adoption of federal government policies that recognize multiple green building rating programs in order to maintain a neutral position with regard to forest products certified by American Tree Farm System (ATFS), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Utility Distribution Generation Policies and Regulations

Issue: Distributed generation (DG) can offer economic, reliability, and environmental benefits to consumers and utilities. Policymakers are engaging in discussions of costs and benefits that will affect all utility consumers, those who choose to utilize DG sources and those who utilize traditional electric utility energy.

1 **Adopted Policy:** NACo encourages federal agencies and Congress to work collaboratively with
2 all stakeholders to update net metering policies. These policies should include various
3 approaches that include equitable and sustainable policies for distributed generation integration
4 and operation, respect regional diversity, ensure electric rates are fair and affordable and that all
5 customers have safe and reliable electricity.

6
7 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

8
9 **Resolution on the Keystone XL Pipeline**

10
11 **Issue:** Allowing construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline

12
13 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges Presidential or Congressional approval for the Keystone XL
14 Pipeline.

15
16 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

1 **FINANCE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS STEERING COMMITTEE**

2
3 **RESOLUTIONS**

4
5 **Resolution on the Marketplace Fairness Act**

6
7 **Issue:** Marketplace Fairness Act

8
9 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) encourages and supports efforts
10 to permit the collection of sales and use taxes from remote sellers and endorses the Marketplace
11 Fairness Act to provide states with the ability to enforce their existing state and local sales and
12 use tax laws.

13
14 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

15
16 **Resolution Supporting Enactment of H.R. 2716**

17
18 **Issue:** NACo urges Congress to enact H.R. 2716 to allow counties and other localities to collect
19 past-due taxes through the Federal Offset Program.

20
21 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports the passage of H.R. 2716 to amend section 6402 of the Internal
22 Revenue Code to allow for the offset of local government tax obligations against Federal income
23 tax refunds.

24
25 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

26
27 **Resolution Opposing New Taxes on Health Care Benefits**

28
29 **Issue:** The possible application of the excise tax provided in the Affordable Health Care Act
30 (ACA) to health insurance for county employees as well as the expansion of taxation on
31 employer-provided health benefits.

32
33 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) opposes the taxation of health
34 insurance benefits to county employees through the application of the ACA excise tax on health
35 insurance benefits for county employees, the capping of the tax exclusion for employer-based
36 defined contributions made by counties and any new taxes which would apply to the health
37 benefits that counties provide to their employees.

38
39 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

HEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE

PLATFORM CHANGES

Behavioral Health

Vision and Purpose: The National Association of Counties (NACo) seeks to (1) improve the responsiveness, coordination, accountability, and integration of person-centered behavioral health services to provide timely and appropriate help to individuals, families, and communities; (2) reduce mental health crises, homelessness, and incarceration by strengthening community based services, including early intervention, outreach, engagement, prevention, crisis support, rehabilitation, housing, employment and peer run services for persons of all ages; and (3) ensure that all Americans with mental illnesses, substance use conditions, or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and their families can gain access to evidence-based and emerging best practices based on the values and principles of trauma-informed care and mental health recovery, delivered in a culturally and linguistically competent manner, to ensure that they can fully participate and/or regain full lives in the most integrated settings within their chosen communities.

NACo Positions: Counties represent a major cornerstone for behavioral healthcare services in the United States. They plan, operate and finance public community-based services for persons with mental illnesses, substance use conditions or intellectual/ developmental disabilities. For this reason, NACo has endorsed the positions summarized below.

NACo Supports:

Services Development

- Improved community-based care and services enabling individuals to live in the least restrictive environment;
- Implementation of evidence-based prevention and health promotion services;
- Efforts to increase the number of public sector behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals;
- Efforts to reduce health disparities in behavioral health services with health literacy, language services, and cultural competency training.

Financing of Services

- Extension of Medicaid to persons detained in county jails, pending disposition of charges;
- Medicaid waivers for essential behavioral health innovations;
- States' managed care waiver requests which offer sole source provisions for providing behavioral health services.

Insurance Reform

- Private and public insurance coverage of behavioral health services, including non-medical interventions;
- Parity in coverage and availability of behavioral health services with other health services, regardless of payer source;
- The removal of Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) exemption of self-insured plans from state insurance regulation, including extending federal behavioral health parity requirements to such plans;

- Parity of mental health and substance use benefits in Medicare, in Medicaid beyond the Medicaid expansion, and in all private health insurance plans, including small business plans.
- Cost controls allowing the availability of the most effective medications at the lowest cost.

Federal Government Support

- Federal funding and legislation to divert non-violent persons with mental illness, substance use and intellectual/developmental disability conditions from county jails and into appropriate care;
- Federal government support and development of behavioral health information, services and research; particularly into causes and cures and the promotion of those findings;
- The National Institute of Mental Health's efforts to promote systems that finance and deliver care in community settings including reducing federal categorical restrictions;
- Full funding and reauthorization for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA);
- Increased federal funding for school-based behavioral health services targeted to at-risk youth.

Regulatory Reform

- State and local flexibility in using substance use and mental health block grants funds to address local problems, including services for persons with co-occurring disorders;
- State flexibility for integrated and concurrent treatment programs for persons with co-occurring disorders;
- Amending Medicaid's Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion to promote better access to services;
- Federal policies that support the development and funding of long-term mental health support services to counties which experience major natural and manmade disasters;
- State flexibility in determining the length of participation in mental health or substance use treatment that would count toward Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work requirements.

NACo Opposes:

Regulatory Reform

- Federal regulations that may exempt state licensing and certification standards or regulations;
- Federal mandates that require states to have a competitive bidding process for when counties are acting as purchasers on behalf of the state; and
- Federal categorical restrictions that limit needed services available to persons with mental illness, substance use or intellectual/developmental disability conditions.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Health System Reform

A. Vision and Purpose: County governments are integral to America's current health system and will be crucial partners in achieving successful ongoing and continuous reform. At the most basic level, county officials are elected to protect the health and welfare of their constituents. County tax payers contribute billions of dollars to the American health care system every year and their elected representatives must be at the table as full partners in order to achieve the goals of access for all improved quality of care, improved cost efficiency of services and the

1 elimination of disparities. NACo supports implementing – and making improvements to – the
2 Affordable Care Act (ACA), by regulation and additional legislation, in order to enhance the
3 ability of county governments to build healthy, safe and resilient communities. To that end,
4 NACo endorses the following components of health system reform:

5
6 **B. Local Delivery Systems and Access for All:** NACo supports ongoing system reform that
7 focuses on improving access to and delivery of quality health services for all. Health insurance
8 coverage is not enough. Insurance carriers participating in public programs should be required to
9 extend coverage into rural areas and to contract and coordinate with local providers. Local
10 delivery systems should coordinate services to ensure efficient and cost-effective access to care,
11 including primary and preventive care, behavioral health vision care and oral health, for
12 underserved populations. County governments are uniquely qualified to convene the appropriate
13 public and private partners to build these local delivery systems in a way that will respect the
14 unique needs of individuals and their communities and should be offered financial incentives and
15 regulatory flexibility to do so. Also, County governments are uniquely positioned to optimize the
16 local service delivery system by implementing cost-effective services and eliminating
17 redundancy and waste in the delivery system.

18
19 **C. Public Health and Wellness:** NACo supports an ongoing enhanced focus on disease and
20 injury prevention and health promotion is a way to improve the health of our communities and to
21 reduce health care costs. Healthy communities depend upon a full array of interrelated county
22 services and programs which include access to healthy foods, community development plans,
23 and public works infrastructure projects that promote healthy living and access to affordable
24 housing and shelter. Local public health considerations should be systematically integrated into
25 land use planning and community design processes to help prevent injuries and chronic disease.
26 Likewise, the public health response to emergencies should be fully integrated into each county's
27 emergency management plan. Policies are also needed to address health inequity, the systemic,
28 avoidable, unfair and unjust differences in health status and mortality rates, as well as the
29 distribution of disease and illness across population groups. Investing in wellness and prevention
30 across all communities will result in better health outcomes, increased productivity and reduce
31 costs associated with chronic diseases.

32
33 **D. Expanding Coverage:** NACo supports universal health care for all with universal health
34 insurance coverage. Existing public health insurance systems should be strengthened and
35 expanded, including Medicare, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
36 As states and counties attempt to shoulder their legislatively mandated responsibilities to provide
37 care for the indigent and uninsured, federal regulatory barriers should be removed to allow
38 flexibility and innovation at the local level. Restrictions on the expansion of County Organized
39 Health Systems should be lifted and they should be authorized to serve as a public plan option in
40 their service areas.

41
42 **E. Maintaining a Safety Net:** NACo believes that the intergovernmental partnership envisioned
43 in the Medicaid statute should be strengthened. NACo supports the enhanced Medicaid
44 reimbursement rate for the ACA expansion population and the provision requiring the federal
45 medical assistance percentage (FMAP) to be passed through to counties contributing to the
46 nonfederal share. Local safety nets, supported by Medicaid and disproportionate share hospital
47 (DSH) payments, should not be dismantled to "pay for" universal coverage. DSH payments
48 should not be phased out or down until health insurance coverage expansion and other delivery
49 system reforms are fully implemented and the effects on DSH payments can be accurately
50 assessed. Assumptions should not be made that DSH can be cut by any arbitrary amount on
51 some arbitrary timeline during the implementation of health care reform.

F. Health Workforce: NACo believes that the health professional and paraprofessional workforce must be supported and enhanced. It is important that we sustain training programs and sites of service that enable us to develop a complement of health professionals that can address the needs of a changing, growing and aging population. Because public hospitals have often been teaching hospitals, NACo supports reasonable medical education funding as an integral part of the business model of these institutions.

NACo supports initiatives and programs to recruit, train, license and retain health professionals, and allied professionals and paraprofessionals, on an expedited basis. Funding for existing education and training programs – in secondary, post-secondary and vocational educational settings – should be increased and targeted towards initiatives to expand and diversify the health workforce. Partnerships between local economic developers and workforce development professionals should be encouraged to meet growing health care sector demand. Targeted incentives including scholarships, loan forgiveness and low-interest loan repayment programs should be developed to encourage more providers to enter and remain in primary care and public health careers. Primary care providers should be empowered to – and compensated for – case management services.

G. Health IT: NACo believes the federal government should support the integration of health information technologies into the local health care delivery system, including the behavioral health and substance use treatment systems and county jail health systems. NACo supports efforts to promote the use of a range of information technologies to facilitate appropriate access to health records and improve the standard of care available to patients, while protecting privacy. This includes deployment of broadband technologies to the widest possible geographic footprint. Other tools facilitate evidence-based decision making and e-prescribing. Using broadband technologies, telemedicine applications enable real-time clinical care for geographically distant patients and providers.

H. Long-Term Care: Federal policies should encourage the elderly and disabled to receive the services they need in the least restrictive environment. Since counties provide and otherwise support long term care and other community based services for the elderly and disabled, state and federal regulations and funding programs should give them the flexibility to support the full continuum of home, community-based or institutional care for persons needing assistance with activities of daily living. Nursing home regulatory oversight should be reformed in order to foster more person-centered care environments.

I. Jail Health: NACo believes the federal government should provide health care coverage for otherwise eligible county detainees, pending disposition of charges. Furthermore, a true national partnership is needed to divert the non-violent mentally ill from jail and into appropriate evidence-based treatment in community settings, if possible. Finally, resources should be made available to counties to implement timely, comprehensive pre-trial and re-entry programs so that justice involved individuals will have access to all needed health and social services, including behavioral health and substance abuse treatment, to avoid recidivism and become fully integrated into the community.

Approved | July 14, 2014

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution Supporting Ongoing Federal Support for Local Safety Net Providers

Issue: Need to maintain strong health care safety net system as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is implemented.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges the federal government to ensure the availability of adequate and sustainable funding for safety net providers as they continue to care for the uninsured.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Development and Expansion of Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Under the Affordable Care Act

Issue: Parity for mental health medical coverage for newly ensured populations under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Adopted Policy: NACo supports implementation of the ACA so as to ensure access to the highest quality mental health and substance use disorder services for newly insured populations.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the National Conversation on Mental Health

Issue: County role in the National Conversation on Mental Health.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the goals of the Administration's ongoing effort to encourage a national conversation to increase understanding and awareness about mental health and to identify ways to reduce stigma and to expand coverage and improve access to mental health services, especially for young people and veterans. NACo calls on the Administration to continue to recognize counties as essential partners these efforts and to engage county officials as additional national and local conversations are planned and implemented.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Provisions of the Affordable Care Act That May Help County Safety Net and Behavioral Health Programs

Issue: Essential need to implement key features of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA).

Adopted Policy: NACo supports full funding for, and implementation of, the provisions of the ACA that help counties meet the service needs of low income and disabled populations. Specifically, NACo supports maintaining and expanding affordable health coverage and benefits to uninsured and underinsured residents who rely on county health care delivery systems – including the Medicaid expansion. NACo also supports the ACA's provisions to improve care coordination to ensure that everyone has a medical/health home for efficient, accessible and cost-effective care; to improve access to preventive care and health promotion for underserved populations; and to promote the use of peer supports and counselors, together with effective care coordination that spans health and social support services.

Approved | July 14, 2014

1 **Resolution on Responding to the Behavioral Health Needs of**
2 **our Returning Veterans**

3
4 **Issue:** Behavioral health needs of returning veterans.

5
6 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports policies to ensure that:

- 7
- 8 • U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funds are made available to reimburse
 - 9 counties for the services provided to veterans eligible for VA services and for services
 - 10 provided to veterans awaiting determination of eligibility.
 - 11 • VA funds are made available to reimburse services provided to veterans eligible for VA
 - 12 services by public and private providers under contract with the VA.
 - 13 • U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) funds are made available to reimburse counties for
 - 14 the services provided to veterans eligible for DOD services.
 - 15 • Appropriate county level data are available so that counties know how many veterans are
 - 16 returning to their local areas.
 - 17 • Appropriate legislation and guidance from the Administration are available to correct
 - 18 gaps and deficiencies in the DOD and VA service delivery systems.
- 19

20 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

21
22 **Resolution on Essential Support for Services for Persons with Behavioral Health and**
23 **Development Disabilities**

24
25 **Issue:** Close coordination across health and social service programs.

26
27 **Adopted Policy:** Care coordination across federal programs that serve persons with disabilities
28 should be fully maintained for current beneficiaries and expanded appropriately to serve the
29 disability population newly insured through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Social service
30 programs, particularly affordable housing and job training, should be expanded so that persons
31 with disabilities can become and remain fully independent in their home communities.

32
33 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

34
35 **Resolution Supporting Efforts in the Prevention and Treatment of**
36 **Obesity and Overweight**

37
38 **Issue:** Reduce obesity and overweight and improve wellness.

39
40 **Adopted Policy:** NACo recognizes obesity and overweight as conditions that can persist from
41 childhood to adulthood, that are associated with chronic disease and that cause preventable and
42 premature deaths in adults, adolescents and children. NACo supports local public health
43 department leadership in obesity and overweight prevention.

44
45 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

46
47 **Resolution on Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness**

48
49 **Issue:** Local health departments play a vital role in promoting and maintaining the nation's

1 health and security. They have legal authorities and perform preparedness functions and duties
2 to ensure the safety and well-being of counties in the face of potential public health emergencies.

3
4 **Adopted Policy:** To ensure the public's health and safety, NACo urges the Administration and
5 Congress to provide adequate funding for programs authorized in the Pandemic and All-Hazards
6 Preparedness Reauthorization Act (P.L. 113-5) which build and sustain local infrastructure for
7 public health emergency preparedness.

8
9 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

10 11 **Resolution Endorsing the Vision and Goals of the National Prevention Strategy**

12
13 **Issue:** Support for the National Prevention Strategy.

14
15 **Adopted Policy:** NACo endorses the overarching vision and goal of the National Prevention
16 Strategy and will support actions and promote policies that support its effective implementation
17 across all levels of government and in communities.

18
19 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

20 21 **Resolution on Changing Nursing Home Oversight to Support** 22 **and Promote Culture Change**

23
24 **Issue:** Regulatory barriers to improving nursing home culture.

25
26 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to
27 remove barriers and regulations that hinder providers from making transformative
28 environmental, administrative and care practice changes that promote positive outcomes to
29 resident and family satisfaction and improved quality of care and quality of life.

30
31 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

32 33 **Resolution on Persistent Health Disparities**

34
35 **Issue:** Persistent health disparities.

36
37 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports legislation to reduce health disparities and address the social
38 determinants of health, increase the diversity and cultural and linguistic competencies of the
39 health workforce, and improve environmental justice. This must include significant direct federal
40 funding for counties to implement programs designed to reduce disparities, by direct service
41 delivery and in partnership with providers.

42
43 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

44 45 **Resolution Supporting Charity Care Requirements for** 46 **Non-Profit Health Care Facilities**

47
48 **Issue:** Charity care requirements for non-profit and tax-exempt health care facilities.

49
50 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports imposing charity care requirements on non-profit and tax-
51 exempt health care facilities, including standards that measure facilities' access to and utilization

of tax-exempt capital, to objectively determine the amount of actual health care providers tender to those in need against the value of tax exemptions that the facilities receive.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Encouraging the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to Require Private Insurance Companies to Pay for Health Costs for their Preadjudicated Clients

Issue: Private insurance companies' "inmate exclusion" shifts health care costs from preadjudicated inmates to counties.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to prohibit insurers from denying reimbursement under health benefit plans for covered services provided to preadjudicated persons in the custody of local supervisory authorities.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Funding for Alzheimer's Disease Research, Community Education and Outreach, and Caregiver Support

Issue: Lack of sufficient funding for Alzheimer's disease research, Alzheimer's community education and outreach, and resources for caregivers, family members, and those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the continuous and increased use of federal funds to support Alzheimer's disease research, Alzheimer's community education and outreach, and resources for caregivers, family members, and those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Improving the VA's New "eClaims" Initiative

Issue: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has developed a new "eClaims" website that is intended to improve many services for veterans, including the disability claims process; unfortunately, parts of this "eClaims" initiative may do more harm than good for some of our veterans.

Adopted Policy: NACo should help increase accountability for three aspects of the VA's new "eClaims" initiative that may harm our veterans' ability to access benefits. First, NACo urges Congress to stop implementation of the proposed VA rule that would totally end the use of standard paper forms for the filing of disability claims. Many veterans simply can't access the internet and this would suppress their basic rights to seek benefits that they are otherwise fully entitled to. Second, NACo urges Congress to determine how many Veteran Service Officers (VSO's) throughout United States do not have access to the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP), with a particular analysis of how security credentialing limits a VSO's ability to access a veteran's record and to successfully advocate on behalf of a veteran. Third, NACo urges Congress to investigate how the new "eClaims" initiative will limit the role of VSO's as advocates for veterans. Without VSO representation, there will likely be an increase in the initial denial rate for claims, an increase in the number of appeals, an increase in the ultimate number of unsuccessful claims, and an increase in the length of time for final benefits to be awarded.

1
2 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

3
4 **Resolution on Immigration Health Care**

5
6 **Issue:** Improving immigrant access to health care coverage.

7
8 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports extending eligibility to anyone residing in the United States,
9 regardless of immigration status, to purchase Qualified Health Plan coverage through the Health
10 Insurance Marketplace exchanges, including access to premium assistance and tax credits. The
11 federal government should help local health departments fund public health services for
12 immigrants living and working in our counties.

13
14 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

15
16 **Resolution Calling on the Federal Drug Administration to Finalize Rules Around**
17 **Electronic Cigarettes and Other Novel Tobacco Products**

18
19 **Issue:** Federal Drug Administration regulation of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and novel
20 products such as nicotine gels and dissolvables.

21
22 **Adopted Policy:** Urge the Federal Drug Administration to act swiftly and implement rules for
23 the sale manufacture, distribution, and marketing of electronic cigarettes and novel products.

24
25 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

26
27 **Resolution Supporting Improved Quality in Nursing Homes through Workforce**
28 **Development and Creative Staffing Models**

29
30 **Issue:** Staff turnover is a major obstacle to continuity, quality of care and quality of life in
31 nursing homes. Medicaid and Medicare funding, which recognizes the cost and importance of
32 adequate staff; and the ability to hire, train and retain staff of varying skill levels, helps to
33 provide high quality and person- centered long-term care services.

34
35 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties urges Congress to authorize innovative
36 demonstration projects to test models of care that use direct-care workers (DCWs) in advanced
37 roles.

38
39 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

40
41 **Resolution Supporting Alternate Service Delivery for Veterans and Their Families**

42
43 **Issue:** Address capacity and efficiency of the Veterans Administration system in provision of
44 health care and related support services to veterans and their families.

45
46 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports legislative and administrative action at the federal and state
47 levels to develop alternate means of providing health care and related support services to
48 veterans and their families, including partnership with traditional for-profit, non-profit, county-
49 based and community health care providers.

50
51 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

HUMAN SERVICES AND EDUCATION STEERING COMMITTEE

PLATFORM CHANGES

INTRODUCTION

Every county in the United States administers and funds part of the cost of strengthening communities and protecting and enhancing families. The Human Services and Education Committee of the National Association of Counties (NACo) exists to support counties in this work. The role of counties varies widely from state to state, but human services and health expenditures are among the largest parts of county budgets.

NACo supports a broad, comprehensive array of services for families, children, individuals with disabilities and the elderly. Social services, public health, preventive services for children and youth, early childhood development, parent education and support, childcare, and other programs that encourage and support families also strengthen communities throughout our country.

Poverty is a national problem and requires a national solution. Federal efforts to reform public assistance must recognize that poverty is influenced by national economic factors that are not within the control of local or state governments.

Families in poverty usually need support services to become self-sufficient. Education and job training, childcare, Medicaid, mental health and substance use disorder coverage, housing, transportation, and work programs are supports that often involve counties. Federal requirements in these programs should be flexible and coordinated with local partners to provide a seamless range of services.

Programs mandated by the federal government should be fully federally funded. It is important that new programs do not duplicate existing state and local efforts; the federal government also must provide adequate time to implement major changes to prevent disruptions in program delivery.

New federal programs should be integrated with an appropriate, existing administrative delivery system. Congress should encourage coordination with state and local governments when seeking citizen input, such as advisory committees to oversee program development, so that there is no duplication of state and local coordinating efforts.

NACo believes decisions on laws and regulations should be made using data and measurable outcomes. Scrutinizing existing and proposed mandates using these standards will help reduce unnecessary and unfunded mandates, streamline government, and use limited resources effectively, which will benefit clients and constituents alike. NACo urges the federal government to ask these key questions when considering changes:

- Was comprehensive data used to define the problem and desired outcome?
- Were experts who administer the affected programs engaged?
- Will it streamline or add layers of bureaucracy?
- Is it redundant or inefficient?
- Are current local staffing levels sufficient to comply with additional requirements?
- Will we be able to measure the outcomes to be achieved by this change?
- Is there adequate federal funding to pay for all direct local costs?
- Are there other models that may provide better outcomes?

- Have local elected officials been consulted?
- Has there been collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies?
- Does it limit local and state flexibility to be responsive to community needs?

Counties are the front-line providers of basic social services; we seek to achieve an appropriate blend of local administrative flexibility and federal and state standards to provide a basic level of assistance for children and families.

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SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

Self-sufficiency programs are meant to be a temporary safety net for families and individuals who are experiencing unemployment, underemployment or have other barriers to self-sufficiency.

A. Block Grants for Entitlement Programs: NACo believes that the federal government should be responsible for adequately funding its entitlement programs. NACo opposes mandatory block grants and funding caps for federal assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, and Foster Care. Capped block grants in these programs would shift the full cost of program growth and inflation to states and counties. NACo also opposes reductions in administrative funding for these programs that would result in unfunded mandates to counties and states.

B. Block Grants for Categorical Programs: NACo recognizes strong county government as an essential component and partner in the effective operation of national-state-local human services programs. Local governments are often best equipped to administer human services programs, and therefore must be assured an effective role in the development and implementation of federal programs.

NACo supports consolidating existing categorical grant programs in order to reduce complexity and improve flexibility and program delivery at the local level. Human services block grants must follow the following principles:

- Programs should be controlled by elected county officials responsible directly to the taxpayers.
- Federal block grant proposals must be developed in close consultation with county officials.
- Federal block grant funds for health and social services programs should be allocated directly to counties where an existing service delivery system is in place.
- States must be required to plan jointly with county officials and to publish program plans for review and comments.
- Where direct funding is not available, states must be required to pass through maximum dollars to counties.
- Reasonable transition time should be allowed to move from categorical grants to block grants, including sufficient time to adjust county and state laws, budgets, and administrative procedures.
- There must be an absolute reduction in federal mandates and regulations, and increased flexibility and simplicity in program administration.
- No matching funds should be required of local governments.
- No maintenance of effort should be required. State and local government laws and procedures governing spending should apply to block grants.

1
2 **C. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):** The success of TANF depends on
3 counties' flexibility to target local needs and support participants' work activities. Without that
4 flexibility and the funding to implement it, the working families who are struggling toward self-
5 sufficiency will lose supportive services and many will fall back on cash assistance. Welfare
6 reform is an ongoing process of supporting working families in gaining self-sufficiency, not a
7 one-time removal of families from the welfare rolls.

8
9 Many TANF participants who find work continue to need assistance with job retention,
10 transportation, counseling and other support services such as child care and health care.
11 Additionally, TANF funding must be able to react quickly to economic downturns and other
12 emerging issues by having unallocated reserves that states can tap quickly.

13
14 **1. Funding:** TANF should have an annual inflation increase, including the supplemental
15 grants for high- growth states. The TANF state entitlement block grant structure should be
16 maintained without carve-outs or set-asides. The funding level for the TANF Contingency
17 Fund should be increased. NACo supports new funding for research and dissemination of
18 information on family formation.

19
20 **2. Flexibility:** States, counties, and Native American tribes should be permitted to spend
21 carryover funds on any allowable use of TANF. This would include transferring funds to the
22 CCDBG and SSBG.

23
24 **3. Participation Requirements and Work Activities:** NACo opposes arbitrary and
25 counterproductive work and participation requirements and supports a strong county role in
26 mutually negotiated outcome measures in which states are judged by their progress toward
27 achieving these goals. NACo supports greater flexibility in the TANF work requirements in
28 order to allow counties and states to meet the individual needs of their caseloads. These
29 include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 30
31
 - A 50 percent work participation rate for two-parent and single parent families;
 - Thirty hours of work a week for two-parent and single parent families;
 - At the very least, the 12 activities included in the original TANF law;
 - Allowing individuals who are participating in substance abuse or mental health treatment, and domestic violence services to count those activities as work;
 - Continuing to exclude victims of domestic abuse and mothers with young children from the participation requirement;
 - At least twelve weeks of thirty hours per week a year for job search and job readiness activities;
 - Twenty-four months for vocational education to a higher percentage of the caseload;
 - Allowing more than 10 hours a week of basic skills and education training to count as work activities and allowing these hours to count toward work participation rates;
 - Removing teen parents from the 20 percent vocational education limit;
 - Exempting relatives who are caring for a child who would otherwise be in foster care from the work requirements and the time limit;
 - Allowing vocational education and high school equivalency programs to count towards the work participation rates;
 - Exempting adults who are the primary caregivers of a disabled family member from the work requirements; and

- Allowing a parent providing child care in a two-parent family to count toward the work requirement.

4. Time Limits: For time-limited assistance to be successful, it must be accompanied by adequate federal and state funding for a wide continuum of supportive services that will help families move toward self-sufficiency. NACo supports preserving and increasing state flexibility in administering the federal time limits. This includes allowing states to discount months in which the recipient participates in work and/or specific work activities, including substance-use disorder treatment, behavioral health and domestic violence services in compliance with their employability plan; and eliminating child care, transportation, and housing from the definition of assistance.

NACo supports the twenty percent hardship exemption and the family violence exemption from the TANF time limit. Victims of sexual assault should be added to this exemption. States should be allowed to lift the lifetime ban on TANF eligibility for individual family members with drug felony convictions.

5. Maintenance of Effort: Current law is unclear on the ability of states to supplant existing funding with federal TANF funds, and under what circumstances a state may use federal funds to increase existing state-funded programs. Once a state or county spends its Maintenance of Effort (MoE) for a given fiscal year, it should be able to draw down its full allocation of federal TANF dollars for that year at any time. Unspent funds should not be applied against future allocations. Obligated funds should be treated and reported as spent. The supplantation provisions must be clarified so that replacement of state dollars with federal dollars is strictly prohibited, but allow using federal dollars to increase the coverage or availability of a state program above current state spending levels.

6. Teen Parents: Teen parents in particular are at great risk of long-term welfare dependence. Teen parents should be required to pursue their high school education or GED. Alternative education should be provided when needed and waivers should be developed for special circumstances. The education system should make the necessary provisions to provide needed child care, counseling and other supportive services for teen parents. NACo supports alternatives that would encourage teenage parents to live with their parents or other responsible adults, and fund enhanced case management and independent living arrangements.

7. Program Coordination: An integrated workforce development system should be encouraged by giving counties greater flexibility to coordinate programs and blend funds.

8. Family Promotion: TANF already has the flexibility for states to promote marriage and family formation. Any new incentive programs aimed at marriage promotion must be funded with new money, and should not be carved out of TANF. NACo opposes penalties associated with marriage promotion outcomes. NACo supports funding and disseminating further research on these subjects.

9. Partial Credit: Many families, particularly those with special needs, struggle to meet their work participation requirements. Under current law, no credit is given for these families, even if they fall short by as little as one hour. Counties and states should be allowed to apply partial credit for the hours that these families participate.

1 **10. Phasing-Out Benefits:** A single dollar increase in TANF's Income Reporting Threshold
2 can make a family ineligible for benefits and can serve as a disincentive to work. Counties and
3 states should be allowed to gradually phase-out cash benefits as the family's income increases.
4

5 **D. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** The SNAP program is critical to
6 struggling families and has proven to be one of the most countercyclical federal programs
7 because benefits can reach families quickly during economic downturns as well as natural
8 disasters. NACo opposes further cuts to SNAP.
9

10 Despite many improvements, the program's day to day management is still cumbersome and
11 needs modernization. At the same time, counties and states are still dealing with administrative
12 reimbursement cuts imposed in 1998 that have reduced the average national reimbursement rate
13 from 50 to 47 percent and needs to be restored. NACo supports greater state and local flexibility
14 regarding the cumbersome time limit for able bodied single adults, the lifetime ban on eligibility
15 for individual family members with drug felony convictions and allowing all states to seamlessly
16 enroll Supplemental Security Income participants in SNAP. The minimum SNAP monthly
17 benefit is \$16 per person and should be increased. Most of the households that receive the
18 minimum payment are elderly.
19

20 **E. Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** SSI benefits and resource limits have not kept pace
21 with inflation. A significant number of persons, including the homeless, who are potentially
22 eligible for the program, do not participate. Congress and the administration should:
23

- 24 • Consider the impact that changes to SSI will have on county general assistance and
25 indigent health care programs;
- 26 • Provide benefits to individuals who receive care in county-owned residential facilities;
- 27 • Reevaluate payment levels to ensure SSI recipients are provided with an adequate standard
28 of living;
- 29 • Reevaluate the asset limit to reflect inflation;
- 30 • Simplify and expedite the application and eligibility process; and
- 31 • Fully fund and expand SSI outreach programs.
32

33 **F. Earned Income Tax Credit:** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has significantly
34 boosted the incomes of low-income working families. According to Census Bureau data, the
35 EITC helps move more children out of poverty than any other program. NACo supports
36 changes to the EITC structure that increase the number of eligible families and provide higher
37 benefit amounts.
38

39 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
40

41 **Children's Services** 42

43 **A. Early Childhood Education and Development:** The importance of the early years in
44 child development is well documented. Quality prenatal services, health care, nutrition, and
45 pre-school education are essential to the healthy development of a child. Early intervention and
46 prevention programs, particularly home visitation programs, produce numerous advantages.
47 Children who participate in early childhood development programs record outstanding
48 developmental progress and greater success in the future. Other advantages include early
49 detection of health and learning problems, higher educational achievement, preventing juvenile
50 delinquency, lower crime rates, greater parental involvement in school programs, and reduced

1 teen pregnancy rates. Consequently, best practices demonstrate investment in early childhood
2 development programs reduces the need for chronic health care services, utilization of child
3 welfare programs, juvenile justice measures and public assistance. NACo supports federal
4 initiatives to help counties develop and expand these voluntary early childhood and parent
5 education programs. They include:

- 6
7 • **Head Start/Early Head Start:** Congress should provide adequate funding for
8 comprehensive programs such as Head Start/Early Head Start, to ensure that needed
9 educational, nutritional, and social services are available to disadvantaged pre-school
10 children, including children with disabilities. Early Head Start, in particular, deserves
11 stronger support so that infants, toddlers and their caregivers can take advantage of the
12 program's continuum of services at an earlier age.
13
- 14 • **Educational Coordination:** NACo supports strengthened coordination of state and
15 federal pre-school programs with county agencies that provide related services to
16 children and their families. NACo further supports coordination between child care
17 programs and Head Start to allow for full-day, continuous care at a single location.
18 Better coordination and follow-up with schools are needed to ensure that the gains made
19 by Head Start are not lost in future years.
20
- 21 • **Nutrition and Food Support:** Adequate nutrition not only prevents serious health
22 problems, but also helps children improve their ability to learn. The Supplemental
23 Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Feeding Program for Women, Infants, and
24 Children (WIC) are valuable components of the continuum of services needed to
25 ensure children's physical and mental development. NACo therefore opposes further
26 cuts to SNAP and supports continued expansion of WIC.
27

28 **B. Child Welfare Services:** The child's natural family has the primary right and
29 responsibility to provide each child a safe and nurturing environment. Society must provide the
30 necessary services and supports to safeguard and enhance the ability of all families to fulfill this
31 essential role. Failing this, it becomes society's responsibility to provide for expeditious,
32 alternative arrangements that are permanent and meet the child's physical, mental, and emotional
33 needs. The societal response works best when governments at all levels collaborate in their
34 efforts to restore children and families to health and wholeness.
35

36 In many states child welfare, substance use disorder treatment, behavioral health and services to
37 individuals with developmental delays/disabilities are administered by counties, yet the
38 various systems fail to operate collaboratively. Consequently, children suffer. Children whose
39 parents struggle with chemical dependencies also suffer from substance use disorder and health
40 problems. States and counties often are able to provide treatment to only a fraction of these
41 parents and children. Access to adequate and timely services is even more difficult to obtain for
42 children and youth with co-occurring conditions such as developmental delays and disabilities.
43 NACo supports funding for new partnerships among federal, state and local child welfare and
44 substance use disorder agencies. NACo further supports increased federal funding for school
45 and community-based behavioral health, developmental and substance use disorder and services
46 for children and youth. Counties must be involved in the planning and implementation process
47 and must be eligible for direct funding.
48

49 NACo believes that systems that protect abused and neglected children should be based on a
50 continuum of care, including a broad array of preventive services. When out-of-home care is

necessary, kinship placements must be thoroughly explored before a child is placed into foster care. Counties should be afforded flexibility in designing services that best meet the needs of their children and communities.

1. Foster Care, Kinship Care, Guardianship and Adoption Assistance: a variety of foster care situations should be available and sufficiently funded to provide for the differing needs of children. NACo strongly opposes block grants and/or funding caps in the federal Foster Care program. NACo strongly supports the following:

- Modernizing the eligibility determination system by linking federal foster care eligibility from the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) income eligibility standards and developing a financing system that responds to a child's imminent risk of abuse or neglect;
- Acknowledging the role that counties play in the foster care and child welfare system by consulting county officials in the development and implementation of legislation at the federal and state level;
- Enhancing county and state flexibility to provide supportive services for children and their families, including preventing unnecessary removal from the home and enhancing outcomes for children;
- Using Title IV-E funds for subsidized kinship guardianship and kinship post-guardianship services both prospectively and retroactively;
- Allowing Medicaid to cover more than life threatening care for dependent, abused, and neglected undocumented children in state custody. At a minimum, rehabilitation and targeted case management associated with abused or neglected children, and medical care required by federal policy pertaining to foster children should be covered;
- Allowing counties and states to include reunification and post-reunification services within the definition of IV-E Foster Care maintenance payments;
- Allowing IV-E Adoption Assistance funds to be used for post-adoption services for adopted children as well as subsidies;
- Government owned/operated residential treatment programs of more than 25 beds in size should be treated on an equal basis as similar not-for-profit and for-profit facilities, and should be eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement;
- Allowing states and counties to use IV-E funds to provide services for children placed in non-IV-E settings that prevent children from being placed in foster care;
- Allowing states and counties to use IV-E funds to provide prevention, pre-placement and early intervention services for children who are determined to be candidates for foster care.

NACo strongly opposes block grants and/or funding caps in the federal Foster Care program because they would undermine counties' ability to ensure the health and safety of our most vulnerable children. If Congress adopts a capped allocation rather than continue to operate under an open-ended entitlement, NACo recommends the following basic principles:

- There must be adequate funding available through the duration of the grant;
- Training and welfare information systems must remain separate from the flexibility proposal;
- States should be required to maintain their current level of effort in child welfare;
- Emergency funds should be flexible and broad enough to allow access by sub-state

regions with sudden caseload increases;

- Foster care children must remain categorically eligible for Medicaid;
- States that opt to receive the capped allocation must be allowed to opt back into the open-ended entitlement at any time;
- States should be able to negotiate the funding baseline for a block grant with the federal government;
- States should be allowed to retain the current flexibility to negotiate waivers for localities; and
- State associations of counties, in states where counties operate child welfare systems, must be consulted and state legislatures must have the right to approve a state's request to opt into the capped allocation system.

2. Foster Youth: Research shows that children aging out of foster care generally have poor outcomes. NACo urges a national "call to action" to raise awareness of the issues faced by children aging out of the foster care system. Additionally, NACo supports the following measures to improve outcomes for youth aging out of foster care:

- Enable disabled youth receiving federal foster care payments to immediately receive SSI benefits when leaving the foster care system;
- Enhance federal funding for workforce development, housing, health care, independent living programs, mental health, substance abuse services, and transitional services; and
- Coordinate and align resources between human services and workforce development to ensure completion of secondary education, gainful sustainable employment and/or post-secondary occupational training.

3. Training and Administration of Foster Care, Kinship Care, Guardianship and a doption Assistance: Proper administrative support for these programs is essential to ensure children's continued well-being. NACo opposes any attempt to cap the Title IV-E administrative reimbursement for foster homes and social worker case management costs as an unwarranted cost shift to counties and states. States and counties also need to be given adequate time and resources to implement new requirements such as more frequent case reviews and automation of records and systems.

Staff training should be reimbursed at 75 percent regardless of the proportion of children in a state who are eligible for federal IV-E Foster Care maintenance and Adoption Assistance program payments. Additionally, states should have the flexibility to use IV-E funds for cross-agency training of child welfare staff and other public and private agencies that work with these children, including substance abuse, mental health, education, juvenile justice, probation, and welfare agencies. Training funds should also be provided for foster parents, kinship care and guardianship care providers, and adoptive parents.

4. Child Protective Services: Federal policy must ensure local capacity and flexibility for immediate response to reports of child abuse and must provide a coordinated, comprehensive services systems that are designed to protect children and restore family functioning. NACo supports the development of an outcomes-based child protection system through a series of benchmarks developed at the local level that will monitor a community's progress based on its socio-economic needs and priorities.

C. Child Care: High-quality child care services are needed to ensure that we meet the developmental needs of children. Child care policies must recognize that the majority of mothers with young children are employed at least during a portion of the child's early years.

Federal support for child care should be available to all public assistance recipients who need it while participating in employment, education, or training. Funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant must be increased to meet the needs of eligible families, while maintaining the funding and flexibility in TANF.

Federally funded childcare should be available to working parents as they leave public assistance and should continue to be available on a fee scale based on their ability to pay. In the very least there should be enough federal child care funds to ensure that quality services are available to families with incomes of up to 225 percent of the federal poverty level and for families that leave TANF. Financial support should be made available for infant care, child care for children with special needs, children in foster care, and child care during non-traditional hours when needed.

Public child care resources such as licensing and monitoring of providers, information and referral, and assistance in selecting appropriate care, should be available to all, without regard to income or resources. State and local licensing laws should be carefully monitored to ensure adequacy of facilities and caretakers.

Employers should be given increased financial incentives to provide child care for their employees on site or as a benefit. The Dependent and Child Care Tax Credit should be made refundable.

D. Child Support: It is the right of every child to be supported by his or her parents. NACo supports the federal Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement program as a cost-effective means of ensuring that right. NACo supports providing federal financial incentives to states that opt to pass-through a higher percentage of child support collections to families on public assistance. NACo urges Congress to permanently restore the ability of counties and states to draw additional federal match dollars from the reinvestment of child support incentive payments. County-administered child support programs should be allowed to retain the full application fee for cases where the custodial parent is not receiving cash assistance by identifying it as an administrative cost rather than as program income.

NACo supports removing the cap on the Child Support Incentive Fund and supports maintaining the 66 percent reimbursement rate for administrative costs and the 90 percent rate for genetic testing. NACo supports programs that assist non-custodial parents to be appropriately involved in the lives of their children financially and emotionally. Any new child support enforcement mandates must be accompanied by enhanced federal reimbursement.

NACo opposes private sector access to child support data and enforcement tools.

NACo supports legislation that creates a corrective action plan for states that have been unable to implement federal child support requirements; restricts penalties to corrective action plan non-compliance; and allows alternative systems configurations that provide expanded local flexibility for automated child support payments.

NACo supports legislation to streamline the international enforcement of child support obligations of parents who live outside the United States.

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Between 2011 and 2030 the 78 million individuals who were born between 1946 and 1964 will reach the age of 65. This means that the number of older adults in the U.S. will more than double. Not only will there be significantly higher numbers of the elderly, they will also be living longer. Individuals over the age of 85 are already the fastest growing sector of the population. At the same time, the number of working age people is only increasing by 20 percent and there will be fewer workers to support the retired population.

NACo supports a continuum of care for the elderly that provides supportive services to assist older persons remain active, productive and independent. These services would include adult day care, transportation, respite care, housing alternatives, caregiver training, support groups, in-home support services, family counseling, daily money management, public conservatorship and guardianship services, as well as chore services, personal care, skilled nursing care, and long-term care.

NACo supports federal policies that recognize the role and responsibilities of county government in assuring necessary and effective services for the elderly, including community-based and long-term care services. Federal policy should recognize that these costs have increased, and should support, facilitate and provide adequate federal funding for county implementation of these ever increasing costs and responsibilities.

A. Older Americans Act: NACo supports the Older Americans Act's goal of developing a coordinated program of services and opportunities for our older citizens. The Act should provide maximum flexibility for county governments to target resources to address the needs of the elderly in their community. Congress should fully fund the programs authorized under this legislation. Congress should expand and improve access to daily nutrition and meal services, respite care, home care services, adult day care, services to family caregivers, information and referral services, and research.

The changes in the aging population require better planning and targeting of health and human services programs. NACo urges the federal government to assist states and counties by funding in-depth needs assessments to determine the real needs of the elderly in their community and the adequacy of existing services and gaps in delivery.

B. Long-Term Care: County government has a long, established role as a provider, purchaser, administrator and/or contractor for long-term health care. Services should be provided in the least restrictive environment meeting the individual's needs.

Additional flexibility should be provided in Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans' Services, and other federal programs to encourage and enable the expansion of community-based care and assisted living facilities as a means of avoiding unnecessary institutional care.

Informal caregivers should be given support and provided incentives to encourage them to continue to provide support for those in need of services.

Rural counties have a higher percentage of senior citizens than urban counties, but they are less likely than their urban counterparts to have access to in-home and community-based services. NACo supports efforts to expand these programs in rural areas.

C. Adult Protective Services: Adult Protective Services (APS) vary widely among states and generally cover neglect, self-neglect and fiduciary and physical abuse of the elderly and disabled

adults. In many states, counties have the responsibility for APS. Unfortunately, there are no clear data on the incidence of elder abuse and neglect nationwide although some studies suggest that almost 11 percent of people ages 60 and older faced some form of elder abuse and a 2009 report by the MetLife Mature Market Institute and the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse estimates that seniors lose at least \$2.5 billion each year to financial abuse. There is insufficient national information on the victims and perpetrators of abuse or evidence-based best practices. The Elder Justice Act (EJA) is the first federal program designed to combat abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults. The program was authorized at \$777 million over four years but has yet to be funded. Counties in many states are responsible for adult protective services. NACo therefore supports full funding for the EJA and a federal research strategy.

D. Social Security: As the providers of last resort for health and social services, counties have an interest in preserving the benefits received by the nation's most vulnerable populations. Social Security benefits prevent poverty for people of all ages. NACo urges Congress, as it reforms Social Security, to protect the financial security of current and future Social Security beneficiaries, especially low-income individuals, the disabled and surviving spouses and children.

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Social Services

There must be a human services program designed to achieve the full objectives of encouraging self-support, self-reliance, strengthening of family life and the protection of children and adults. The broad range of supportive social services needed to strengthen the community and family structure should emerge at the local level from a federal-state-county partnership that provides for maximum flexibility at the county level.

These services should be administered at the local level and adequately funded at the federal and state levels. States should be required to pass through to counties the majority of the state's share of federal funds. To ensure this pass-through, a limit should be placed on the amount states can retain for administrative or other purposes.

A. Social Services Block Grant (SSBG): SSBG is used by many counties for a variety of programs, such as adult protection, child care for children with special needs, child welfare, and child abuse prevention. In some cases, such as adult protection, this is the only source of fund for these services.

SSBG statutory funding has dwindled over the years from a level above \$3.1 billion to its current level of \$1.7 billion, which in reality is lower because it is affected by sequester cuts in 2013. NACo supports restoring the program to the highest level possible. Additionally, NACo strongly supports continued flexibility in the SSBG program and maintaining the authority to transfer up to ten percent of TANF funds to SSBG. This flexibility enables states and counties to use the program to meet their specific local needs and goals.

B. Services to Individuals with Disabilities: Counties recognize that the objectives of encouraging self-support, self-reliance, strengthening of family life, and protective services apply equally to the physically, mentally, and developmentally disabled. NACo supports federal action that will promote these objectives by removing categorical restrictions that inhibit comprehensive planning and delivery of services to the disabled.

1 NACo supports federal action that increases incentives for deinstitutionalization and
2 encourages and funds the expansion of community-based services, including the necessary
3 individual and program financial support, to prevent reinstitutionalization. NACo supports equal
4 opportunity for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of American life. Federal funding is
5 necessary to supplement local efforts to achieve program and facility accessibility and equal
6 employment opportunity.

7
8 **C. Community Action Agencies:** Through its boards involving the public sector, the private
9 sector, and the community, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) represents a unique
10 and effective partnership with counties, states, federal government and community organizations.
11 NACo strongly supports full funding for CSBG.

12
13 **D. Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is a major social problem not only because of its
14 high incidence, but also because of its pervasive and self-perpetuating nature. The problem
15 affects not only spouses, but also individuals in a wide range of living arrangements, including
16 children, senior citizens, and those with developmental problems.

17
18 Children living in violent homes, whether victims or witnesses, frequently become abusive
19 parents and/or mates themselves. Domestic violence is often associated with the development of
20 other social and emotional problems. Treatment of the problem often involves temporary
21 respite and permanent community resources to shelter victims. However, federal funding is
22 insufficient.

23
24 The federal government should fund domestic violence programs that permit counties and
25 communities to develop resources and services to protect family members and prevent family
26 violence, improve staff training, and link programs in the health, behavioral health, self-
27 sufficiency, child welfare, criminal justice, law enforcement, and social service systems for
28 effective treatment and prevention of domestic violence.

29
30 **E. Energy Assistance for Low Income Persons:** NACo recognizes the need for a
31 comprehensive energy assistance, weatherization, and conservation program with sufficient
32 federal funding and incentives so that the cost burden does not fall on county government.

33
34 Eligibility criteria should include renters. It should not discriminate against single-person
35 households and should not be limited to persons eligible for other federal programs. At the same
36 time, every effort should be made to coordinate with other programs in order to simplify the
37 application and eligibility program.

38
39 Congress has not always appropriated emergency or contingency funds for the Low Income
40 Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). There needs to be a fund that addresses sudden
41 situations such as fluctuations in energy costs, natural disasters and extreme weather conditions.

42
43 **F. Assistance for the Homeless:** NACo recognizes the need for a comprehensive national
44 policy to end homelessness and poverty. A significant federal commitment is necessary to meet
45 the growing need for services, including housing, mental health services, and substance abuse
46 treatment to ensure that the burden for providing care and assistance to the homeless does not
47 fall disproportionately upon counties. NACo endorses the federal strategic plan to prevent and
48 end homelessness; especially the commitment for greater cooperation among federal agencies
49 and the special attention being paid to veterans, families, and youth.

1 **G. Veterans' Services:** NACo strongly supports full funding to qualified veterans for
2 educational, housing, and medical costs. NACo endorses increased investments in solutions to
3 veteran homelessness, and encourages both the Administration and Congress to continue to
4 increase the resources targeted to end homelessness among veterans. NACo supports a process
5 that is responsive to the needs of veterans and their families, provides appropriate information,
6 and facilitates administrative services.

7
8 **H. National and Community Service:** The Corporation for National and Community Service
9 (CNCS) and the programs it funds such as VISTA, Foster Grandparents, AmeriCorps and Senior
10 Corps help youth and senior citizens become involved in the community and provide volunteer
11 services to millions of Americans. NACo supports full funding for CNCS.

12
13 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

14 15 **Legal Immigrants, Migrants, Refugees and Undocumented Individuals**

16
17 Legal immigrants, refugees, undocumented individuals, and others enter and remain in this
18 country as a result of federal action or inaction. The heavy fiscal burden that is placed upon
19 local governments is the direct result of national immigration policies or the lack of
20 enforcement of immigration policies. It is imperative that be an on-going consultation process on
21 immigration issues with NACo and other national organizations representing state and local
22 governments.

23
24 **A. Services:** Counties traditionally provide health, self-sufficiency programs and social
25 services to persons residing within their boundaries, regardless of their legal status. Since
26 immigration is a federal responsibility, the full cost, including administrative costs, of any
27 services or assistance to non-citizens should be paid by the federal government rather than by
28 county and state governments.

29
30 The 1996 welfare reform law limited refugee eligibility for SSI to seven years. NACo strongly
31 supports restoring full SSI eligibility to refugees.

32
33 In addition to reimbursing county governments for costs incurred in assisting legal immigrants,
34 refugees, undocumented individuals, and others, the federal government should strengthen its
35 enforcement efforts to control illegal immigration.

36
37 **B. Refugee Program:** Refugees should be resettled in a manner that minimizes their
38 concentration into a few counties. When making decisions to admit new refugees into the
39 country, the U.S. State Department should give advance notice of those decisions to the states
40 and counties that are most likely to be affected by the refugee resettlement.

41
42 There should be a permanent federal refugee program with uniform policies for all refugee
43 groups and with sufficient federal funds to provide assistance during resettlement. Refugee
44 resettlement funding has deteriorated over the years from 36 months to eight months of
45 assistance. Federal funding should continue at the 100 percent reimbursement level for financial
46 assistance, medical care, social services, employment services, and education until refugees reach
47 a reasonable level of self-sufficiency.

48
49 It is critical that funding formulas respond not just to the challenges that state and local
50 governments face at the point of initial resettlement. Secondary migration needs to be addressed
51 through accurate data and funding that follows the refugee.

1
2 The federal government should develop contingency plans, in consultation with state and local
3 elected officials, for mass asylum situations in which the U.S. is the country of first asylum. The
4 legal status and rights of applicants for asylum and their eligibility for federal assistance must be
5 clear and consistent.

6
7 The federal government must increase its dialogue with and accountability to state and local
8 governments. NACo opposes any proposal that would transfer funds needed by states and
9 counties for refugee assistance to resettlement agencies without proper state and county
10 consultation and agreement. States and counties should have the flexibility to use refugee
11 employment services for hard to serve populations who have been in the U.S. more than five
12 years.

13
14 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

15 16 **Education**

17
18 Education is key to the success of our economy and our ability to attract businesses to our
19 communities. Furthermore, our quality of life is directly related to a quality education in our
20 schools.

21
22 Local education systems affect all segments of the community and are critical to the success of
23 many programs operated by counties. Regardless of the specific funding arrangements
24 between counties and school districts, they share a common tax base and are both faced with
25 limited resources.

26
27 **A. Elementary and Secondary Education:** Although states have the primary responsibility
28 for elementary and secondary education, it is in the national interest and merits continued
29 federal financial support. NACo urges Congress to substantially amend the Elementary and
30 Secondary Education Act to grant greater local flexibility in the use of student achievement
31 measures, the design of interventions for schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress and to
32 address the individual needs of students with disabilities and students of English as a
33 Second Language. NACo strongly urges Congress to fully fund the law so that states and local
34 education agencies (LEAs) can implement all aspects of the law. Congress should provide
35 increased funding to assist local communities in meeting regulations designed to eliminate
36 discrimination.

37
38 NACo supports the current method of disbursement of funds LEAs and does not support the
39 use of vouchers and policies such as tuition tax credits that would provide an unfair competitive
40 advantage to private schools; and erode support for public schools.

41
42 Bullying and harassment interfere with students' ability to achieve higher academic standards
43 and can lead to even greater school safety problems. NACo urges the federal government
44 provide school districts with the tools and resources they need to ensure that all students feel safe
45 within their schools.

46
47 **1. Health Services in Schools:** Medicaid program should reimburse states, local
48 governments and LEAs for health and behavioral health services provided in schools. This
49 reimbursement should include direct services such as medical appointments and therapies
50 and administrative services such as outreach and care coordination activities.

2. Impacted Areas: Congress must recognize the burdens placed on communities that have a large number of federal employees and facilities and must continue to provide federal aid to meet the extra costs involved in educating the children of federal employees.

3. Education for Children with Disabilities: NACo supports the goal of available free public education to all children with disabilities. Congress must keep the federal commitment to ensure full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act so that states and LEAs can meet the law's requirements.

4. After-School Programs: County governments run a variety of programs such as after school day care, mentoring/tutoring and recreational programs. Programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers should be available directly to counties.

5. School Construction: NACo supports efforts to establish federal incentives that will help state and local governments finance school repair, renovation, modernization, and construction projects and facilitate the development of community services for children and families in school buildings.

B. Adult, Career and Technical Education: The federal government should place increased emphasis on the promotion of career technical programs across the secondary and post-secondary educational spectrum. These programs should respond to the needs of the local economy and should be coordinated with local self-sufficiency and job training programs. Congress should provide adequate funding for adult education, including English as a Second Language programs.

C. Higher Education and Financial Aid: According to the American Association of Community Colleges, there are 986 public community colleges nationwide and local funds provide 17 percent of their revenues. Additionally, several local governments fund four-year colleges. Pell Grants play a significant role in community college financial aid due to their lower tuition and higher percentage of low-income students. NACo therefore believes that Pell Grants and federally backed student loan programs are vital if this nation is to preserve equal educational opportunity and receive the benefit of the fully developed talents of the younger generation. Loans and grants should be based on economic need and require reasonable levels of self-help.

D. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education: STEM-related jobs are expected to grow by 17 percent over the next decade, with 60 percent of those jobs requiring college degrees or higher, yet the U.S. is not attracting enough students into those fields. NACo strongly supports efforts to improve STEM education, including health sciences, at all levels of the educational continuum. These efforts should include attracting more STEM teachers to rural elementary and secondary schools and encouraging groups that are underrepresented in the field to pursue STEM education, particularly women, African Americans and Latinos.

Approved | July 14, 2014

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution on the Reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant

Issue: The Child Care and Development Block Grant expires at the end of the fiscal year.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which includes enhanced program flexibility, and s increased access to quality and safe child care.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the International Collection of Child Support Obligations

Issue: Congress is considering legislation to streamline and make more uniform the process for collecting child support obligations from non-custodial parents living outside the United States.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress to enact legislation implementing the 2007 Hague Treaty Convention, which contains procedures that ratifying countries must follow to process international child support cases in a uniform, simple, efficient, and accessible manner that is cost-free to U.S. citizens seeking support in other countries.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Community Services Block Grant

Issue: The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) has been targeted for serious cuts and program changes.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports full funding for CSBG as well as the program's formula grant structure.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the DREAM Act

Issue: Support for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act

Adopted Policy: NACo calls upon Congress and the President to promptly enact the DREAM Act.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Early Childhood Development

Issue: Increased funding for early childhood development

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties supports legislation to increase investments in early childhood development, including greater coordination among pre-school programs in schools and county run programs such as home visitation, child wellness, Head Start, Early Head Start and quality childcare.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Issue: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has not been reauthorized in over 12 years.

Adopted Policy: NACo calls on Congress to reach a compromise on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and enact legislation this year.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Issue: Congressional action needed to fix our broken immigration system.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress and the President to enact comprehensive immigration reform this year that:

- Provides for uniform enforcement of all existing laws;
- Secures our borders;
- Includes a national strategy for coordination among federal, state, local and tribal authorities;
- Establishes a sensible and orderly guest worker program;
- Imposes no unfunded mandates on state and local governments;
- Includes no mandates on counties to enforce immigration laws;
- Preserves the eligibility of legal non-citizens for federally-funded health benefits and provides a sustainable funding stream to counties for their cost of providing health services to legal non-citizens who are denied federally-funded health benefits;
- Establishes an earned path to citizenship that includes registering, background checks, demonstrating employment, learning English and civics, paying back taxes and fees that may be required;
- Improves and simplifies the current legal immigration system; and
- Provides green cards for science, technology, engineering and mathematics students who have received a graduate degree from American universities.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Reauthorization of the Older American Act

Issue: Aging population growth is increasing demand for services to older Americans.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges the strengthening, through additional funding, of the Older Americans Act (OAA) in these key areas: home delivered nutrition services, case management, information and assistance service, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Supportive Services (including Long-Term Care), Ombudsman Program, and Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. NACo further urges Congress to reauthorize the OAA, expand program flexibility to distribute funds between nutrition programs (Title III C), as well as between Title III C and Supportive Services (Title III B). NACo further supports the local service delivery structure for OAA programs.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Reducing Poverty by Half in Ten Years

Issue: Despite War on Poverty and gains made over the past 50 years, poverty still affects millions of individuals and families in the United States.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the establishment of a Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Poverty which will create and carry out a national plan to cut poverty in half in ten years. NACo also supports policies to eliminate the disproportionately higher rates of poverty among children and racial minorities.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Victims of Human Sex Trafficking, Particularly Children And Youth

Issue: Addressing the needs of human and sex trafficking victims.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges state and local governments to change their approach to dealing with juveniles who are engaged in prostitution, by shifting focus away from treating them as offenders to instead recognizing them as children in need of protective services. NACo urges Congress to provide grants to states and counties to support these important protective, trauma-informed services and prevent trafficking, including:

- Improved training for state and local child welfare workers, medical professionals, law enforcement and other criminal justice system personnel who come in contact with the victims and perpetrators of human and sex trafficking;
- Assistance to states and local governments in providing victim-centered services to address their physical, mental health, housing, education and training needs, particularly for the underage victims of sex trafficking; and
- Improved federal outreach, consultation, and coordination to states and local governments on prevention, enforcement and services.

Finally, the federal government must provide effective prosecution of perpetrators of human and sex trafficking, including those who bring foreign-born individuals into the country via trafficking, smuggling and false pretenses.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Social Services Block Grant

Issue: The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) remains vulnerable to cuts in the context of entitlement reform and deficit reduction.

Adopted Policy: NACo strongly supports SSBG, opposes any efforts to eliminate or reduce its funding and calls on Congress to restore sequestration cuts to the program.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant

Issue: The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF) program expires at the end of the fiscal year.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress to revise the current TANF program to provide greater state and county flexibility to create and provide services that support families and help move them off welfare. NACo supports allowing more state flexibility in TANF program design such as allowing higher education to count as work; realistic time limits on education; and allowing states to use TANF funds to support post-secondary educational expenses. NACo urges Congress to, at a minimum, retain and enhance state flexibility to use TANF funds for subsidized employment. Given the demonstrated success of TANF subsidized employment programs, NACo urges Congress to increase funding for those programs. NACo urges Congress to reauthorize all programs within TANF and restore the TANF Supplemental Grants. NACo urges Congress to ensure that reauthorization includes the provision that the TANF block grant is increased annually in an amount commensurate with the rate of inflation.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Unaccompanied Children Crossing the Border

Issue: Addressing the growing number of unaccompanied children from Central America crossing the Southern United States border.

Adopted Policy: NACo calls on the Administration and Congress to address the growing humanitarian crisis of unaccompanied children crossing the border from Central America, to ensure that adequate federal funds are appropriated to shelter and provide care, including medical assistance, while they remain in the country, to ensure that the costs of the care provided to these children are not transferred to counties and to work with the countries of origin to address the conditions that have led to this crisis.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Elder Justice Initiative and Strengthening the Elder Justice Act

Issue: Elder Justice Act reauthorization and full funding.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports federal funding for and continuation of the Elder Justice Act, including the President's FY 2015 budget request of \$25 million for the Elder Justice Initiative.

Approved | July 14, 2014

1 **JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY STEERING COMMITTEE**

2
3 **PLATFORM CHANGES**

4
5 **National Domestic Preparedness Consortium**

6
7 **Under COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, add:**

8
9 **R. National Domestic Preparedness Consortium:** NACo urges Congress to provide
10 maximum funding for the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC). The NDPC is a
11 partnership of several nationally recognized organizations whose membership is based on the
12 urgent need to address the counter-terrorism preparedness needs of the nation's emergency first
13 responders within the context of all hazards including chemical, biological, radiological, and
14 explosive Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

15
16 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

17
18 **RESOLUTIONS**

19
20 **Resolution Proposing Alternative Restructuring for Homeland Security Grants**

21
22 **Issue:** NACo has opposed, and continues to oppose, the Homeland Security Grant Vision put
23 forward by Secretary of Homeland Security in 2012 and 2013. NACo supports and suggests
24 fiscally sound adjustments to these programs which will continue to enhance the nation's
25 capabilities to meet the challenges posed to counties by emergencies and disasters of all types.

26
27 **Adopted Policy:** NACo applauds the efforts of the Secretary to streamline the grant system and
28 build a more fiscally responsible and sustainable program. NACo proposes an alternative that
29 will better address the needs of all levels of government, and that does not discard the advances
30 created by the past grants. We propose consolidation of the current homeland security grants into
31 two programs:

32
33 National Preparedness Program - A compilation of all current homeland security grants from
34 DHS and HHS (except as below), based on realistic risk to each state from all hazards including
35 but not limited to terrorism, grants would be made to each state in order to sustain and enhance
36 resilience and the ability to help other jurisdictions. Prioritization and allocation decisions to be
37 made by the State Administrative Agency in transparent consultation and consent of local
38 governments, and continuing to require that no less than 80% of these funds be passed to local
39 government based on their realistic risk.

40
41 Urban Area Security Initiative - Specific additional funding to the 25 urban areas at greatest risk
42 of disastrous event (of all hazards including terrorism) in light of the significant populations and
43 economic drives located in these areas. Again, the program would be jointly administered by the
44 State Administrative Agency and the existing UASI organizational units and continuing to
45 require that no less than 80 percent of these funds be passed through to the Urban Areas.

46
47 NACo will work with Congress and the other stakeholders to prepare updated legislative
48 language to accomplish these goals.

49
50 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

Resolution Supporting the Emergency Management Performance Grant

Issue: During each of the past two years, the Secretary of Homeland Security has proposed weakening the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and including it with terrorism grants. EMPG is the sole all-hazards grant currently extant, and the most demonstrably successful DHS grant program. At the same time, in light of state funding shortfalls, state Emergency Management agencies have reduced the amounts of EMPG funding passed through to local government.

Adopted Policy: NACo requests that Congress guarantee that the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) remain a separate program, separately funded from all other grants that specifically address terrorism or other specific issues (remaining, then, a truly all-hazards program), and requiring a minimum of 70 percent of EMPG funds be passed through to local government with a 50-50 match requirement.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Legislation Providing Mitigation Funds for Certain Areas Affected by Wildfires

Issue: Support for legislation providing mitigation funds for certain areas affected by wildfires.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports legislation that provides dedicated mitigation funds by providing up to 15 percent of the cost of a Fire Mitigation Assistance Grant (FMAG) to support wildfire mitigation projects.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Juvenile Life Sentencing without Opportunity for Parole

Issue: Children should never be sentenced to “life without parole” for offenses they committed at an age that is characteristic of impulsive, immature and risk-taking behavior- things we know are common for all adolescents.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports eliminating life without parole as a sentencing option for children. We support just and age-appropriate accountability measures for children that will ensure that every child, regardless of offense, is given a meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation. We therefore, call upon State Legislatures across the country and the U.S. Congress to enact legislation that abolishes life without parole for children and provides them with meaningful and periodic sentencing reviews. These legislative changes should be applied both retroactively and prospectively so that no child is allowed to have their human rights violated because of when they were sentenced.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Limiting Jury Awards against Counties for Federal Law Claims

Issue: County governments are largely unprotected from excessive jury awards for compensatory damages arising from claims made under federal law.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress to place appropriate restrictions on the amount of compensatory damages awardable against County governments for claims made under federal law.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting the Stopping Tax Offenders and Prosecuting Identity Theft Act (Stop Identity Theft Act) and Similar Legislation

Issue: Misuse of taxpayer identity.

Adopted Policy: Support all related bills in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate and urge Congress to pass legislation supporting action to reduce tax crimes and identity theft that would halt the victimization of millions of U.S. taxpayers through losses due to several billion dollars in fraudulent claims. Legislation would encourage the Department of Justice (DOJ) to dedicate additional resources, including the use of investigative task forces, to address tax-return identity theft. The legislation would ask DOJ to focus resources in areas with a high rate of tax-return identity theft, coordinate investigations with state and local law enforcement agencies, and protect vulnerable victims, including veterans, seniors and minors. The legislation would increase penalties to help deter this type of crime and protect victims.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting an Affordable and Sustainable Reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program

Issue: Changes made to the National Flood Insurance Program and the release of inaccurate flood maps are causing dramatic increases in the cost of flood insurance.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports a sustainable, fiscally responsible National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) that protects the businesses and homeowners who built according to code and have followed all applicable laws. NACo urges Congress to work with stakeholder groups to craft a sensible and fiscally responsible renewal of the National Flood Insurance Program that keeps flood insurance rates affordable while improving the mapping process.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Funding and Amending Disaster Program Policies for the Management and Mitigation of Post-Wildfire Flooding and Debris Flow Damage

Issue: Funding is either unavailable or inadequate to effectively deal with the newly created or increased flooding and debris flow risks from post-wildfire events.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress to amend the Fire Management Assistance Grant Program (FMAGP) and Stafford Act declaration time period to help states, tribes, and local governments respond to floods and debris flows that directly result from a declared fire.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Rescinding FEMA Mitigation Policy on Hydraulic Fracturing

Issue: FEMA Flood Mitigation Policy Banning Hydraulic Fracturing on Property Purchased with FEMA Mitigation Funds.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges FEMA to rescind its policy banning hydraulic fracturing on any property purchased with FEMA mitigation funds.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Prevention of Fraud Against Veterans and their Families

Issue: Address fraudulent practices in provision of services to veterans and their families.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports county efforts to work with state and federal agencies in educating veterans and the public about fraudulent and misleading programs, including fundraising efforts for illegitimate organizations claiming to provide benefits to veterans, and vendors who charge a fee to assist veterans in obtaining benefits, and in reviewing statutes for the purpose of establishing appropriate penalties for such acts.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP)

Issue: The State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) is more vulnerable to funding cuts as if administered by the Department of Justice (DOJ) than if it were transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Most immigration functions were transferred from DOJ to DHS under the Homeland Security Act of 2002.

Adopted Policy: NACo opposes the reprogramming or rescission of SCAAP funds by the Department of Justice (DOJ), and urges Congress to increase appropriations for SCAAP and to transfer its administration from DOJ to the Department of Homeland Security DHS.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Accountability

Issue: Counties are asked to house immigration detainees in county jails without financial reimbursement from the federal government.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress and the Executive Office to hold our federal government, specifically U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to be financially responsible and to indemnify counties for all liability resulting from ICE detainment of persons solely for Ice purposes; where persons would otherwise be released.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging FEMA to Address Policies re: Deobligation of Approved Disaster-Relief Funds

Issue: Since 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has aggressively sought to recover and deobligate (clawback) previously-approved recovery funds distributed to

1 local governments by FEMA through the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act. The process
2 has created growing uncertainty in counties' abilities to accept disaster-relief funds.

3
4 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges the federal government to clarify the process whereby FEMA can
5 declare that funds distributed to local governments and approved by FEMA for disaster relief
6 efforts are deobligated; so as to ensure that:

- 7
8 1. The deobligation process includes a reasonable timeframe for counties to respond to
9 information requests, and
10 2. FEMA makes timely decisions on appeals filed by counties that face the potential
11 rescission of previously appropriated federal funds.

12
13 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

1 **PUBLIC LANDS STEERING COMMITTEE**

2
3 **PLATFORM CHANGE**

4
5 **FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT**

6
7 **A. Transfer of Public Lands:** NACo believes all fifty states are equal and that every state
8 should receive everything that was promised to them in their enabling acts, including land
9 transfers, if requested by an individual state with consultation with the affected counties.

10
11 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

12
13 **RESOLUTIONS**

14
15 **Resolution on Wild Horse and Burro Management**

16
17 **Issue:** Wild Horse and Burro Management

18
19 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports Congressional legislation to give individual States exclusive
20 authority to manage wild horses and burros on federal lands, including exclusive authority to
21 determine appropriate herd management levels (AMLs) and dispose of animals that exceed
22 AMLs at each State's discretion, just like States do now for other wildlife species.

23
24 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

25
26 **Resolution on Ending the Sequestration of Shared Mineral Lease Act Revenue to the States**
27 **and Returning All Sequestered Revenue to the States**

28
29 **Issue:** The sequestration of Mineral Lease Act revenue to the States.

30
31 **Adopted Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports ending the
32 sequestration of Mineral Lease Act (MLA) revenue to the States and giving back all such
33 sequestered revenue to the States, consistent with the fact that MLA revenue shared with States
34 does not constitute federal budgetary expenditures and should not be subject to mandatory
35 sequestration under the Balanced Budget Emergency Deficit Control Act (BBEDCA) of 1985 as
36 amended.

37
38 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

39
40 **Resolution Supporting Performance Analysis of BLM Master Leasing Plans**

41
42 **Issue:** Many BLM Regional Management Plans (RMPs) are outdated and do not incorporate
43 recent county input that takes into consideration changes in landscapes, economics, multiple
44 uses, populations and local government community needs. In IM-2010-117, BLM was ordered
45 to begin using a Master Leasing Plan process under certain conditions, which was controversial.

46
47 NACo Public Lands Steering Committee in 2013, officially opposed the MLP process.
48 However, the MLP process has been implemented in some states and it would be helpful to
49 know if the MLP process is meeting its goals such as more predictability, faster leasing from
50 fewer protests, and if there have been opportunities for increased transparency and county input
51 into the leasing process.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports BLM preparing a performance analysis/status report on the results from implementing IM-2010-117, including comparing post IM-2010-117 leasing results with pre-IM-2010-117 leasing results on elements to include but not limited to: number of parcels leased, public involvement, county government involvement, lease issuance times, post-lease production rates, protest rates, number of stipulations, length of time for processing Master Development Plans (MDPs).

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging Congress to Address the Growing U.S. Forest Service Trails Maintenance Backlog

Issue: To promote solutions to reverse the trail maintenance backlog on U.S. national forests that currently impedes recreational access, visitation and recreation-related tourism.

Adopted Policy: NACo should urge Congress to pass legislation to improve and safeguard our rich treasury of national forest trails, as recommended in the March 2014 letter to Congress from over 50 regional and national trail- and recreation-focused organizations.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (S. 1875)

Issue: The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have been forced to spend increasing proportions of their budgets on wildland fire suppression, diverting critical resources from the very programs designed to prevent fires. To illustrate, the proportion of budgets of the U.S. Forest Service devoted to wildland fire suppression has increased from 13% in 1991 to 41% in 2013. S. 1875 would move any spending above 70% of the 10-year rolling average for fire suppression outside of the agency's baseline budget by making additional costs eligible to be funded under a separate disaster account.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports S. 1875, the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, so that the budgets of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management will have protection of its resources appropriately devoted to hazardous fuel treatments through active management of the federally owned landscape, rather than having those resources drained by wildland fire suppression.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Emergency Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects

Issue: Supporting Emergency Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports specific components of HR 818, the "Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act," which gives states the authority to identify areas afflicted by the bark beetle epidemic, drought, deteriorating forest health conditions, and high risk of wildfires and to put in place emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects.

Approved | July 14, 2014

1
2 **Resolution Supporting Increased Funding for Forest Service Infrastructure Maintenance**

3
4 **Issue:** Support increased funding for the maintenance of U.S. Forest Service roads.

5
6 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports increased U.S. Forest Service funding to address the U.S.
7 Forest Service's infrastructure and maintenance needs.

8
9 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

10
11 **Resolution Supporting Traditional Receipt Sharing with Counties of Stewardship End**
12 **Result Contracting Project Authority**

13
14 **Issue:** The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have renewed legislative
15 authority to enter into stewardship contracts for management of federal forests and rangelands.
16 The reauthorization does not include, however, traditional sharing with counties of revenues
17 generated from these projects.

18
19 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports stewardship end results contracting projects as a tool to
20 manage federal forests and rangelands, but only if it retains the historical receipts sharing with
21 counties. In this context, the sharing should be based on the gross appraised value of the
22 commodity or product harvested or produced under the contract or agreement.

23
24 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

25
26 **Resolution on Utilization of Federal Timber after Domestic Declaration of Disaster**

27
28 **Issue:** Supporting federal law changes to increase the flow of federal timber for domestic
29 reconstruction purposes (after the declaration of emergency) improves economies and
30 community sustainability.

31
32 **Adopted Policy:** The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act should
33 be amended, specifically sections 307, 315, 316, 323, 421, and 683, to include provisions to
34 require that following a declaration of an emergency production of timber from federal forest
35 lands be expedited. When federal dollars are allocated for disaster relief, changes to these
36 sections would benefit schools, roads, and law enforcement in counties with federal forest lands.

37
38 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

39
40 **Resolution Supporting Active Federal Forest Management with Bridge Funding**

41
42 **Issue:** While counties are deeply grateful for the financial lifeline of the Secure Rural Schools &
43 Community Self-Determination Act (SRS), NACo urges a new direction in management of our
44 federal forests, for the very health of the forests themselves, and for job opportunities and social
45 and economic sustainability. While some form of "bridge funding" to maintain solvency in our
46 counties will be required, particularly given the dominance of federal forest presence in many
47 counties, it must be in concert with a new direction in federal forest management.

48
49 **Adopted Policy:** Legislation that provides bridge funding to forested counties and school
50 districts while economic vitality is restored in these communities is vitally important and

essential. Also, for economic vitality, Congress must mandate active sustainable forest management to achieve resilient forestlands managed by the United States government.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Endangered Species Act

Issue: The Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports legislation

1. Favoring decisions to list plant or animal species as threatened or endangered (T&E listing decisions) that are made through best available science with increased transparency and timelines for decisions;
2. Postponing T&E listing decisions for species in states that have submitted a conservation management plan, giving such states at least a decade to demonstrate that their plans will conserve and recover the species;
3. Encouraging the Secretary of Interior (Secretary) to share critical data, research and scientific information to assist such states in their conservation efforts;
4. Authorizing federal land management agencies to amend their land use plans to comply with and allow such state based conservation efforts;
5. Strengthening the influence of local participation so that local collaboration and/or coordination processes and recommended species management policies are not overridden.
6. Supporting the inclusion of the consideration of the economic impacts to local economies from any species management decisions.
7. Authorizing the ESA to recognize and allow consideration of the predation of threatened or endangered species by natural events, as well as human activities (such as predator impacts and weather-related events).

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Improved Economic Analysis of the Effects of Critical Habitat Designations under the Endangered Species Act

Issue: Need for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service, USFWS) to do an economic analysis that is both cumulative and quantitative when calculating the cost of the declaration of critical habitat pursuant to an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports legislation that would require the USFWS to perform cumulative and quantitative economic analysis, prior to the designation of Critical Habitat, that would measure the effects of such a designation on all affected stakeholders – not just on federal agencies – and would include the effects on possible uses of land and property values, employment and revenues available for state and local governments.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Ongoing Efforts of Western States to Manage and Conserve The Greater Sage Grouse And In Opposition to an ESA Listing of the Greater Sage Grouse At This Time

Issue: Whether the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) should give deference to the efforts of the western states and local governments to manage and conserve the Greater Sage Grouse and recognize those state efforts as adequate enough to forego any Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing of the Greater Sage Grouse as threatened or endangered.

Adopted Policy: Ongoing Greater Sage Grouse management efforts of state and local governments, stakeholder, working groups, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM)/U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and Land Use Plans throughout the eleven western states are protecting and restoring Greater Sage Grouse habitats and reviving populations. Therefore, NACo opposes listing the Greater Sage Grouse as a Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species at this time. Furthermore, BLM and USFS should give great deference to adequately crafted state and local sage grouse management plans when adopting any federal land use plan amendments, pursuant to the consistency and coordination requirements under federal law.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Opposing the Listing of the Gunnison Sage Grouse as an Endangered Species, and Opposing the Designation of Critical Habitat without Scientific Basis, such as in Ouray and Hinsdale Counties, Colorado

Issue: The proposed USFWS listing of Gunnison Sage Grouse as an endangered species and designation of critical habitat is premature, unwarranted, and without scientific basis and does not take into consideration successful ongoing voluntary efforts to protect and enhance Gunnison Sage Grouse populations and its actual habitat.

Adopted Policy: The proposed listing of the Gunnison Sage Grouse as an endangered species and designation of critical habitat is premature, unwarranted, and without scientific basis. Ongoing voluntary efforts of ten Colorado counties and one Utah county where Gunnison Sage Grouse critical habitat has been proposed by USFWS, are adequate to manage, stabilize and restore Gunnison Sage Grouse populations such that a Threatened and Endangered (T&E) listing of this species is unwarranted.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Uranium Activities

Issue: On January 9, 2012, the Secretary of the Interior, using faulty information, withdrew one million acres of the nation's highest grade uranium ores from mineral entry in Northern Arizona.

Adopted Policy: NACo believes that the January 12, 2012 withdrawal for Northern Arizona should be overturned, or revoked, and the lands returned to multiple use status, and under the terms of the 1984 Arizona Wilderness Act, release of lands not suitable for wilderness (except in Coconino County), as long as operators continue to abide by existing state and federal environmental laws, regulations, and standards, including reclamation.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on the Equal Access to Justice Act

Issue: The un-intentioned use of The Equal Access to Justice Act. (EAJA).

Proposed Policy:

1. Support legislation that Amends the Equal Access to Justice Act and the federal judicial code to require the Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the United States to report to Congress annually on the amount of fees and other expenses awarded to prevailing parties other than the United States in certain administrative proceedings and civil action court cases (excluding tort cases) to which the United States is a party, including settlement agreements.
2. Support requirements that such reports: (1) describe the number, nature, and amount of the awards, the claims involved in the controversy, and any other relevant information that may aid Congress in evaluating the scope and impact of such awards; and (2) be made available to the public online
3. Support legislation that directs the Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the United States to create and maintain online a searchable database containing specified information with respect to each award including the name of the agency involved, the name of each party to whom the award was made, the amount of the award, and the basis for finding that the position of the agency concerned was not substantially justified.
4. Support legislation that requires the head of each federal agency (including, with respect to court cases, the Attorney General [DOJ] and the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts) to provide the Chairman all information requested to produce such reports.
5. Support raising the EAJA reimbursement level to \$200 per hour reflecting the market rate, so that those in need (ie. veterans and small business) and that are “directly and personally harmed” can afford a decent and marketable attorney.
6. Institute a \$7,000,000 net worth cap regardless of tax exempt status to reduce the number of lawsuits filed by large nationwide fringe groups that profit from habitual lawsuits.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting the Government Litigation Savings Act

Issue: Accountability and transparency regarding payments made under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA)

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the Government Litigation Savings Act (S.1061/ H.R.1996) as the passage of these bills would:

- Continue to provide a mechanism to assure fair and equal access to public funds for individuals, small businesses and non-profit organizations with limited financial resources to assure their ability to participate in the justice system of these United States;
- Help restore accountability and transparency on how federal funds are being spent by reestablishing a provision for reporting to Congress on expenditures under the EAJA;
- Restrict the amount of EAJA dollars that can be applied for to reimburse successful individual and small entities for legal expenses in actions brought against the federal government;

- Restrict the eligibility to apply for reimbursement of legal expenses for those individuals and entities without the assets necessary to bring legal action against the federal government; and
- Urge Congress to adopt an asset limit for applicants consistent with the congressional intent of the EAJA.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Federal Lands Management Practices

Issue: Federal Lands Management.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the following changes to federal lands management policy:

1. Support legislation requiring federal lands to be managed in both an ecologically and financially sustainable manner providing a source of revenue to the Federal, State, and Local Governments.
2. Support legislation requiring federal lands to be managed with consideration of the potential costs of remediation after a severe fire event.
3. Support the reorganization of Forest Service management to reduce the layers of organizational structure from four to three. Currently they have the Washington Office, 9 regional offices, Forest Supervisor headquarters, and Ranger District Offices.
4. Support clearly defining the Forest Service mission to get more projects 'boots on the ground' with less administrative distractions.
5. Support legislation for the responsible development of natural resources on federal lands and opening more federal lands for market-based leases.
6. Support requirements that direct Federal Land Management Agencies to utilize all the existing authorities to actively manage their lands according to multiple use principles and that also requires them to account for all projects and methods they have used to the Governor's Office of each respective state and each County governing body where those federal lands exist.
7. Support requirements that any projects that are stopped by legal action be immediately remedied and turned back out for implementation.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Reauthorizing the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act

Issue: Reauthorizing the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (H.R. 2068)(S. 368).

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, a balanced approach to western lands that facilitates the sale Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands identified for disposal, which generates revenue for high-priority conservation.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Modifying the National Park Service Contingency Plan that Becomes Effective Upon a Lapse in Appropriations from Congress

Issue: Appropriate management scheme for individual National Park Services (NPS) unit in the absence of appropriation.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) proposes that each Superintendent of all federal land management agencies, who have the inherent knowledge of his or her own facility and/or area, shall be responsible and charged to formulate a plan of operation and identify available funding, in coordination with state and local government, for their unit in the absence of appropriations.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Funding for Our National Parks

Issue: Federal funding for the National Park Service (NPS).

Adopted Policy: NACo calls on Congress to preserve funding for America's national parks. NACo supports maintaining funding for the National Park Service (NPS), recognizing that national parks provide recreation, economic and tourism opportunities for counties, and gateway communities. NACo also urges Congress to increase funding for the NPS to address the dire backlog of maintenance projects, now totaling \$11 billion. Potential funding sources include utilizing some eligible, but unfunded off-shore gas and oil lease monies that are dedicated to Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for support of maintenance and operations for NPS.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging Congress to Establish Community Forest Trust Pilot Programs

Issue: Revenues for counties with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the creation of a community forest trust pilot program that:

- Designates specific USFS land, or natural resources on specific USFS land, outside of wilderness designations to be managed by the states on behalf of counties and schools according to state land management practices and federal and state laws as they apply to state land;
- Allocates revenues generated from the management of these designated lands to all forest counties with the participating state using a mutually agreed upon formula;
- Establishes a management board of county commissioners submitted by a state association of counties (or comparable), and appointed by the governor for each participating state; and
- Allows the USFS to maintain ownership and fire management responsibility of the land.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging Greater Consideration of Community Health and Safety

Issue: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consultation and collaboration with communities adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges and consideration of those community health and safety needs.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service to consult, collaborate and coordinate with counties and other communities adjacent to National Wildlife Refuges when implementing policies that will directly affect their health, safety and welfare and to give the greatest possible deference to their needs.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program

Issue: Long-term funding source for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program (PILT).

Adopted Policy: Except for instances in which acquisition of private land may be necessary to comply with provisions of the Endangered Species Act, or acquisitions are supported by the local government of the affected area, NACo supports designating the use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund as a sustainable source of funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes, with formula modification that would comply with NACo policy & policy #13 of the Federal Land Management & Policy Act of 1976. NACo further supports full funding of annual LWCF appropriations without reductions to state mineral lease funds, if PILT is fully funded through the LWCF fund.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Hazardous Fuels Emergency

Issue: Accumulation of biomass on federal lands.

Adopted Policy: NACo calls on Congress to grant a Governor the authority to declare a state of emergency when the severity of fire danger from fuels on identified federal lands within that state poses a significant threat to public health and safety.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Supporting Reintroduction of the Community Forestry Conservation Act of 2011 and the Use of Community Forestry Bonds

Issue: Authorizing the use of municipal debt (Community Forestry Bonds) as a tool to help keep working forests in communities across the nation.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports the reintroduction and passage of *The Community Forestry Conservation Act of 2011*.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution in Support of Wilderness Legislation with County Input and Support

Issue: Supporting multiple uses on all federal and state public lands so that conservation and development of natural resources is balanced with consideration of local needs. The efficient administration, conservation and development of Colorado's natural resources must be balanced with protection of the environment and consideration of local needs.

Adopted Policy: NACo supports special land designations of federal lands that are proposed by local residents and businesses, is consistent with existing land use policies, and is strongly

supported by the affected counties and stakeholders within which the designation is proposed. NACo strongly encourages congressional delegations to only consider future wilderness legislation with affected counties' support, as exemplified by S. 341, the San Juan Wilderness Act.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Opposing BLM's 2012 Decision to Reduce Lands Available for Oil Shale and Tar Sands Leasing

Issue: The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2012 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), which greatly reduced the areas approved by BLM in 2008 for oil shale and tar sands leasing programs in Utah, Wyoming and Colorado.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges BLM to reverse the 2012 PEIS and approve for oil shale and tar sands leasing all qualifying lands in the Green River Formation.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Opposing BLM's Promulgation of Duplicative Hydraulic Fracturing Regulations

Issue: The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) intent to adopt duplicative hydraulic fracturing rules.

Adopted Policy: NACo is opposed to a BLM hydraulic fracturing rule that does not clearly and fully defer regulation of hydraulic fracturing to states that already have in place comprehensive regulations.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution to Rescind the BLM's "Master Leasing Plan" Oil and Gas Leasing Reform

Issue: Rescind the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Master Leasing Plan Instruction Memorandum and Related Guidance.

Adopted Policy: NACo strongly urges that in all cases except where a specific county requests otherwise, the Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary and the BLM Director to immediately rescind BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2010-117 and all related guidance, because they attempt to implement so-called "Master Leasing Plan" reforms that unlawfully override duly established BLM Resource Management Plans (RMPs) without local government input.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution Urging Congress to Expedite a Commercial Oil Shale Leasing Program

Issue: Oil shale leasing program in the Green River Formation.

Adopted Policy: NACo urges Congress to address in a timely manner, the regulatory review process in order to facilitate a functioning, environmentally responsible commercial oil shale leasing program in the Green River Formation.

1
2 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

3
4 **Resolution on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Management of the Utah Prairie Dog**

5
6 **Issue:** Utah Prairie Dog counts.

7
8 **Adopted Policy:** NACO urges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to modify policies
9 to permit the counting of Utah Prairie Dogs on private land for the purpose species recovery
10 efforts.

11
12 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

13
14 **Resolution on Local Law Enforcement on Public Lands**

15
16 **Issue:** Local law enforcement on public lands.

17
18 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges all federal land management agencies to recognize and respect
19 sheriffs (or the chief local law enforcement officer) in public land counties as the primary and
20 chief law enforcement officer of the entire county. Federal agencies should execute cooperative
21 agreements with counties to ensure fair and prompt federal payment of compensation for
22 additional local law enforcement activities desired of sheriffs, and federal agencies submit their
23 agents for deputization and accountability under local sheriff authority and control.

24
25 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

26
27 **Resolution Supporting Changing Forest Service Employee Supervision**

28
29 **Issue:** Chain of command for U.S. Forest Service (USFS) law enforcement personnel.

30
31 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports a change in USFS personnel organization to place law
32 enforcement officers under the direction of Forest Supervisors.

33
34 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

35
36 **Resolution Calling for Membership on Landscape Conservation Cooperatives Steering**
37 **Committees to Include County Elected Officials**

38
39 **Issue:** County membership on Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC).

40
41 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports the expansion of LCC Steering Committees to include at least
42 one elected county official or approved regional official representing local governmental
43 interests on each Steering Committee, and preferably one from each state in those eco-regions
44 which are multi-state.

45
46 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

47
48 **Resolution Supporting an Amendment to the Antiquities Act to Require Congressional**
49 **Approval and NEPA Review Before a Presidential National Monument Proclamation**
50 **Becomes Effective**
51

1 **Issue:** National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review and congressional approval prior to
2 establishment of a national monument.

3
4 **Adopted Policy:** NACo supports Congressional revision of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to
5 require that any Presidential National Monument proclamation seek the approval of affected state
6 and local governments, be subject to NEPA review, and obtain Congressional approval.

7
8 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
9

10 **Resolution on Acquisition of Private Land for Wildlife Mitigation Associated with**
11 **Renewable Energy Development with Subsequent Transfer to Federal Agencies**
12

13 **Issue:** Acquisition of private land for wildlife mitigation associated with renewable energy
14 development.

15
16 **Adopted Policy:** NACo requests the land and wildlife management agencies adopt procedures
17 that provide for project mitigation other than through land transfer from private to public
18 ownership, unless supported by the affected counties. When such transfers are deemed the only
19 appropriate mitigation, and offsetting the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program (PILT) will not
20 occur, then agencies must provide that project developer would continue to pay the property tax
21 on the transferred land, or fees in lieu of taxes, in perpetuity, unless the land is restored to private
22 ownership at a future date.

23
24 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
25

26 **Resolution on Mitigation for Historic and Recognized Federal Land Multiple Uses When**
27 **Renewable Energy Projects are Developed on Federal Land**
28

29 **Issue:** Allowing multiple use activities on federal lands.
30

31 **Adopted Policy:** NACo requests that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S.
32 Forest Service (USFS) adopt policies that provide real and substantial consideration of historic
33 uses in the project plans and environmental documentation, and require project developers to
34 provide mitigation for their loss.

35
36 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
37

38 **Resolution Supporting Third Party Recreational Concessionaires in County Parks on**
39 **Bureau of Land Management Land**
40

41 **Issue:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) believes it does not have statutory authority to
42 allow third party concessionaires to provide recreational opportunities such as camp grounds,
43 horseback riding, and golf courses on BLM land leased or patented to counties.

44
45 **Adopted Policy:** NACo urges the strengthening of recreational opportunities and the resulting
46 economic benefits through public-private partnerships on all public lands.

47
48 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
49

1 **TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY STEERING COMMITTEE**

2
3 **PLATFORM CHANGE**

4
5 **Preemption of Local Authority**

6
7 **B. Preemption of Local Authority:** Counties need to be concerned about retaining authority
8 as trustees of public property and as protectors of public safety and welfare. The 1996
9 Telecommunications Act acknowledges the balance among federal, primarily through the
10 Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and state and local authority.

11
12 NACo opposes any actions that would undermine this shared responsibility and any federal or
13 state preemption of counties' traditional powers in these areas. NACo opposes efforts to restrict
14 or prohibit, at state and federal levels, county or municipal ownership of communications
15 facilities.

16
17 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

18
19 **RESOLUTIONS**

20
21 **Resolution Supporting Local Government Siting Authority Regarding all Wireless**
22 **Facilities and Related Infrastructure**

23
24 **Issue:** Growing concerns regarding any potential limits on local government wireless facilities
25 and infrastructure siting authority and the need for further clarification of specific language
26 within section 6409 of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012

27
28 **Adopted Policy:** NACo opposes any effort to limit the regulatory role of local government
29 authorities regarding modifications and/or siting of tower facilities and wireless transmission
30 equipment. NACo also urges the Commission and Congressional Leaders to ensure all rule-
31 making, guidelines, and best practices are developed in a cooperative manner with state and local
32 governments.

33
34 **Approved | July 14, 2014**

TRANSPORTATION STEERING COMMITTEE

PLATFORM CHANGES

STATEMENT OF BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The National Association of Counties (NACo) believes that the nation's transportation system is a vital component in building and sustaining communities, moving people and goods, and developing competitive economies at local and regional levels, and on a global scale.

The nation's counties play a critical role in the nation's transportation system. Counties own 45 percent of the nation's roads and 39 percent of the nation's bridges, and are involved with over a third of the transit systems and airports in the United States that connect citizens, communities and businesses. NACo believes that counties should be recognized as major owners of transportation infrastructure and provided levels of funding and authority that adequately reflect their role in the nation's transportation system.

FUNDING AND FINANCING TOOLS

NACo believes that a user-pay approach should continue to be the cornerstone of federal transportation funding and that federal policy should provide counties the flexibility to use additional financing tools, such as tax-exempt bonds and public-private financing for delivering transportation projects.

A. Highway Trust Fund: NACo supports using Highway Trust Fund revenue for a total public transportation program (roadways and transit) and that Congress and the Administration should retain the existing budget treatment of the highway and mass transit accounts within the Highway Trust Fund. In addition, NACo supports increasing and indexing the federal motor fuel user fees to meet current and future highway and transit funding needs, provided all additional revenue resulting from such an increase is dedicated for highway, bridge and transit programs.

B. Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund: NACo supports the full expenditure of harbor maintenance trust fund collections on dredging and harbor maintenance, and providing equity for deep draft ports that contribute collections to the fund but do not have significant dredging needs by allowing them to utilize trust fund dollars for limited port-related uses other than dredging.

C. Airport and Airway Trust Fund: NACo supports funding the airports and airway trust fund at levels that will meet current and future infrastructure needs and allow for the steady flow of authorized funds without cuts or delays. NACo also supports retaining the existing budget treatment of the trust fund, which requires mandatory spending of its funds and ensures that the taxes collected from users of the aviation system are spent on their designated purposes.

D. Passenger Facility Charge (PFC): NACo supports the continued collection of PFC fees for every boarded passenger by public agencies that control commercial airports.

E. Airport Rates and Charges: NACo supports local governments and airport operators having the full authority to impose and enforce fees, rates and charges that dedicate all airport revenue to airport development, capital financing and operations.

F. Off-Airport User Fees: NACo supports the continued authority of local governments and other public airports to set fees, rates, and charges for the use of airport facilities by off-airport business, with the proceeds being dedicated to airport development, capital financing and operations.

1
2 **G. Innovative Financing:** NACo supports innovative financing mechanisms including, but not
3 limited to, qualified tax credit bonds; infrastructure banks; the Transportation Infrastructure
4 Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA); and public-private partnerships that would allow local
5 governments and transportation authorities, such as counties, to leverage federal financing for
6 capital projects.

7
8 **H. Municipal Bonds:** NACo believes the tax free status of bonds used for transportation
9 infrastructure development should be continued with no imposition of additional restrictions on
10 arbitrage and advanced refunding of bonds.

11 12 **COORDINATION AND CONNECTIVITY**

13 NACo believes that an ideal transportation system is balanced, coordinated and encompasses all
14 modes of transportation, including land (roadways, rail and transit), aviation (airports), and
15 marine transport (ports). NACo also believes that continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive
16 planning is an essential part of a coordinated and balanced transportation system.

17
18 **A. Intergovernmental Coordination:** NACo believes a coordinated and balanced transportation
19 system supports the interrelationship and connectivity of transportation infrastructure and
20 services across all levels of government, including county/municipal, state, and federal
21 transportation assets.

22
23 **B. County Role in Transportation Planning:** NACo supports opportunities for counties to
24 participate in local/regional and statewide transportation planning processes and believes
25 local/regional transportation planning organizations (such as Metropolitan Planning
26 Organizations) should be made up of a majority of local elected officials and that local elected
27 officials should be able to re-designate their local/regional transportation planning organization,
28 in consultation with the state, if their organization is not adequately comprised of local elected
29 officials.

30
31 **C. Funding for Transportation Planning:** NACo believes funds devoted to comprehensive
32 planning should be reasonably related to identifiable beneficial results through a benefit-cost
33 analysis.

34
35 **D. Funding for Multimodal Transportation Projects:** NACo supports federal funding for
36 multi-modal transportation projects through discretionary programs and believes local
37 governments should be eligible as sole applicants for these programs.

38 39 **HIGHWAYS**

40 While counties own more road miles in the United States than any other form of government,
41 NACo recognizes that the nation's transportation system depends on roads and bridges owned by
42 all levels of government and that the role counties play within a state varies greatly state-by-
43 state. Therefore, NACo supports a federal highway program that supports investments on both
44 state and locally owned roads and bridges.

45
46 **A. Requirements for Local Projects:** NACo believes counties should be permitted to make a
47 distinction between projects that are statewide and local in character, with requirements for local
48 projects being much less complex.

1 **B. Regional Planning:** NACo believes that regional planning organizations, in cooperation with
2 state and local governments, should be limited to planning for services and facilities of regional
3 significance.
4

5 **C. Statewide Planning:** NACo supports states, with local governmental review and approval,
6 developing multiyear plans and programs for highway improvements and believes that the
7 federal government should review and approve these annual state plans and programs.
8

9 **D. Increased Funding for Local Infrastructure:** NACo believes Congress should increase
10 funding for highways and bridges owned by local governments by redirecting amounts
11 authorized strictly for state-owned highways and bridges.
12

13 **E. Off-System Investments:** NACo supports federal investments for certain projects that are off
14 the federal-aid system, including:
15

- 16 • Programs that target the rehabilitation of critical elements of the transportation system in
17 our aging regions and communities, including high-risk rural roads;
- 18 • Funding for the replacement or rehabilitation of critically deficient bridges which may not
19 be on the federal-aid system, particularly those off-system bridges under county control;
- 20 • Funding to eliminate or grade-separate the most serious hazards among the 165,000 rail-
21 highway grade crossings not on the federal-aid or state-aid systems.
22

23 **F. Trucks and Vehicle Size and Weights:** NACo believes adequate federal funding should be
24 provided to compensate state and local governments for any infrastructure upgrades necessary to
25 accommodate the vehicle size, weight, and configurations mandated by Congress. NACo also
26 supports the continued requirement that all trucks have underride protection devices and believes
27 that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration should periodically review the
28 adequacy of such regulations.
29

30 **G. Standards for Center and Edge Line Markings:** NACo opposes mandated standards for
31 center and edge line markings and believes local governments should be allowed to implement
32 their own policies and procedures.
33

34 **H. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS):** NACo believes counties should be provided
35 flexibility and federal funding to adopt ITS technologies and related infrastructure.
36

37 **I. Highway Safety Plans:** NACo supports the requirement that states develop and update State
38 Strategic Highway Safety Plans in an effort to reduce accidents and fatalities on our nation's
39 roads and believes states should be required to, at a minimum, cooperate with local government
40 officials in the development their statewide safety plans.
41

42 **J. Metropolitan Congestion:** NACo supports increasing, and expanding local control over,
43 funding to urban and suburban counties to address congestion.
44

45 **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

46 NACo believes Congress should provide funds, in partnership with state and local governments,
47 to improve existing public transportation systems and to establish new transit systems where
48 needs and benefits have been determined by local elected officials. In addition, NACo believes
49 the federal government should more fully recognize the appropriateness of counties as a basic

1 area-wide government for planning and operating public transportation services and coordinating
2 specialized transportation.

3
4 **A. Interlocal Cooperation:** NACo supports providing flexibility to counties and municipalities
5 in metropolitan areas to join together and establish area-wide public transit authorities.

6
7 **B. Formula Funding for Urban Transit Systems:** NACo supports full funding of the urbanized
8 area formula grant program at historic levels for both capital and operating assistance.

9
10 **C. Funding for Rural Public Transportation:** NACo supports increased funding to the small
11 urban and rural public transportation program.

12
13 **D. Discretionary Funding for Transit:** NACo supports federal funding for transit projects
14 through discretionary programs that support rail modernization, new start and small start system
15 investments and extraordinary bus capital needs, and believes projects should be evaluated based
16 on its cost effectiveness, responsiveness to community transportation needs, and state and/or
17 local financial support of the operations and/or maintenance of such projects and facilities.

18
19 **E. Commuter Benefits:** NACo supports increasing the monthly amount that commuters may set
20 aside pre-tax for mass transit to a level that exceeds the allowable pre-tax amount for parking.

21 **AIRPORTS**

22 NACo believes the federal government should more fully recognize the ability of counties, as
23 area-wide governments, to plan and coordinate aviation with other modes of transportation and
24 to control land use for future airport development.

25
26
27 **A. Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and PFC Funds:** NACo supports flexibility for
28 airport sponsors to invest AIP and PFC funds, and local fees, rates and charges, for the financing
29 of intermodal transportation facilities, including but not limited to roads, interchanges, public
30 transit, and safety projects that are an integral component to the growth and sustainability of the
31 airport.

32
33 **B. Small Community Air Service Program:** NACo supports continued, sufficient and
34 guaranteed funding to meet the needs of small communities to retain, expand and attract air
35 service.

36
37 **C. Essential Air Service (EAS):** NACo believes the federal government should continue
38 subsidies for assisting airlines serving small communities and fully fund the EAS program.

39
40 **D. Federal Share of Airport Development Projects:** NACo supports an increased federal share
41 on airport development projects to help local governments with inadequate local revenue
42 sources.

43
44 **E. Local Control over Airport Investments:** NACo supports increased flexibility for public
45 airport sponsors in dedicating available airport grant funds to finance projects determined to be
46 of highest priority by the sponsoring county/community.

47
48 **F. Military Airports:** NACo believes the federal government should work cooperatively with
49 counties in establishing the joint use of existing military airports for the purpose of achieving
50 considerable public savings.

1 **G. Air and Noise Pollution Control:** NACo believes the federal government should continue
2 research of air and noise pollution caused by civilian and military aircraft, and enforce existing
3 standards, rules, and regulations.
4

5 **H. Airport Security:** NACo supports providing sufficient federal funding to both commercial
6 and general aviation airports to guarantee adequate security and to ensure that no financial
7 burdens or federal security requirements are imposed on local governments or public authorities
8 that operate these facilities.
9

10 **RAILROADS**

11 NACo believes there should be a coordinated federal-state-local effort to return rail service to its
12 appropriate place in a balanced national transportation system. In this effort, NACo supports
13 expanding and improving long-distance passenger service, and providing needed regulatory
14 reform at the federal level.
15

16 **A. Freight Rail Assistance:** NACo believes Congress should provide assistance to local
17 governments, states, and railroads for the rehabilitation, preservation, and improvement of rail
18 lines with the goal of maintaining and improving needed freight service.
19

20 **B. Amtrak:** NACo believes Congress should continue to provide subsidies to Amtrak at a level
21 consistent with maintaining a reasonable level of service and to provide necessary capital
22 improvements with appropriate accountability controls. However, NACo opposes using any
23 transportation trust fund dollars to address Amtrak's financial problems.
24

25 **C. Short Line Railroads:** NACo believes Congress should enact legislation that would
26 preserve and restore short line railroads in urban and rural communities.
27

28 **D. High-Speed Rail:** NACo supports efforts to improve and expand regional and national high-
29 speed rail service to serve those counties and regions that would benefit from such service.
30 However, NACo opposes the use of funds from the Highway Trust Fund for high-speed rail and
31 believes there should be no preemption of state and local taxing authority and no negative impact
32 on any current commuter rail funding.
33

34 **PORTS AND WATERWAYS**

35 NACo believes that a vibrant waterway transportation system is vital to our economy and
36 provides our nation with the ability to meet the needs of the shipping public. NACo supports
37 legislation that provides increased funding and regulatory relief to facilitate the revitalization,
38 modernization, and maintenance of port facilities, including legislation that ties the expenditure
39 of harbor maintenance trust fund revenues to their intended purpose – harbor maintenance
40 projects. NACo also believes that federal policy should ensure that state and local officials
41 responsible for administration and security at U.S. ports are consulted before the sale of port
42 facilities in their jurisdiction to foreign state-owned entities.
43

44 **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

45 NACo believes the federal government, in cooperation with states, local governments and
46 industry, should continue and expand research, development, and deployment programs that
47 focus on new and existing modes of transportation, including but not limited to the development
48 of reasonable, safe and cost effective low volume roads.
49

50 **Approved | July 14, 2014**
51

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution on County Priorities for MAP-21 Reauthorization

Issue: This year, the nation's transportation system will face two looming crises: the expiration of the current surface transportation authorization law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21); and the dwindling solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

Adopted Policy: With MAP-21 set to expire on September 30, 2014 and the Highway Trust Fund nearing a major fiscal cliff, NACo urges Congress to adopt a secure and long-term funding strategy for the future of the Highway Trust Fund and pass a long-term surface transportation bill (preferably six years in length) that provides sufficient funding and supports counties' surface transportation priorities.

County surface transportation priorities in the reauthorization of MAP-21:

- **Provide Long-Term Funding Certainty:** Support passage of a new surface transportation authorization that provides long-term funding certainty by raising the federal gas tax and/or finding alternative sources of revenue to make the Highway Trust Fund solvent.
- **Increase Funding for County Road and Bridge Projects:** Support county road and bridge projects by: 1) maintaining the set-aside for off-system bridges and continuing states' ability to reduce the set-aside requirement if there are insufficient off-system bridge needs; and 2) providing more funding for locally-owned on-system roads and bridges by increasing the overall funding level for the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and continuing the STP suballocation to local areas but increasing the share to greater than 50 percent.
- **Increase the Role of Counties in Statewide Planning:** Provide an increased role for counties in statewide transportation planning by: 1) requiring state departments of transportation, at a minimum, cooperate with local government officials (including county transportation officials) in the development of planning and funding allocation processes, including the development of State Strategic Highway Safety Plans; and 2) requiring state departments of transportation coordinate with local government officials in defining the term 'high risk rural road' – or developing a federal definition of the term 'high risk rural road' after considering input from state and local stakeholders and other performance measurements.
- **Build on Reforms from MAP-21 that Strive to Expedite Project Delivery:** Continue and expand efforts to streamline and expedite project delivery by: 1) maintaining the categorical exclusion for projects receiving limited federal assistance (\$5 million or less); and 2) simplifying the process for pursuing categorical exclusions.
- **Support Public Transportation Systems of all Sizes:** Support rural, small and large transit systems by: 1) continuing to fund transit programs through the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund; 2) increasing federal funding for rural transportation systems; 3) continuing and expanding transit operators' flexibility to use federal dollars for operating assistance; 4) restoring historic funding levels for the Bus and Bus Facilities program and revising the program to require that all funds for Urbanized Areas with a population of 50,000 or more be apportioned directly to the designated recipients of 5307 funding; and 5) providing discretionary funding for both rural and urban transit systems to address one-time and/or major investments.

- **Make Safety a Priority on all Roads and Bridges:** Emphasize safety on all roads and bridges by: 1) revising the High Risk Rural Road (HRRR) safety rule under the Highway Safety Improvement Program, which requires an increase in existing fatality rates on HRRRs over a two-year period before a state must obligate funds to improve rural road safety – rather than waiting for safety problems to get worse, states should either be required or incentivized to decrease existing fatality rates on HRRRs through safety investments; 2) prioritizing investments for federal-aid bridges to address safety and infrastructure improvements for bridges with the greatest need – regardless of whether they are on or off the National Highway System; and 3) continuing existing limits on truck size and weight due to the enormous threat larger and heavier trucks pose to road safety and locally-owned infrastructure.
- **Support Innovative Funding and Financing Methods:** Continue and encourage alternative financing methods that help local governments stretch federal, state and local investments farther by: 1) continuing robust funding for the TIFIA program; 2) incentivizing innovative project funding and financing through an increased federal match (up to 100 percent) or by allowing local governments to use savings realized through innovative contracting methods toward their local match; and 3) creating a pilot program or providing technical assistance to local governments that support the planning for and design of multi-jurisdictional project bundling.
- **Invest in Passenger Rail:** Include funding for passenger rail in the reauthorization of MAP-21 that supports current rail service and the development of high-speed rail.
- **Continue for the reservation road program:** NACo believes reservation road funding should be continued for the improvement and maintaining of roads that are used to transport children to or from school or Head Start programs on or near reservations.

Approved | July 14, 2014

Resolution on Modifying the Train Horn Rule

Issue: Supporting feasible and safe implementation of railroad quiet zones through modification of the Train Horn Rule

Adopted Policy: NACo urges the U.S. Congress and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to reexamine the Train Horn Rule (49 CFR, Part 222, the Use of Locomotive Horns at Highway-Rail Grade Crossings) in order to determine how local communities can feasibly implement quiet zones without insurmountable costs, requirements and processes while also continuing to protect public safety. Additionally, NACo encourages Congress to provide new or unobligated federal funds to localities for the express purpose of establishing quiet zones.

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