



ADVOCACY 101 FOR COUNTIES

Maximizing Your Impact During the
NACo Legislative Conference

ADVOCACY 101

Maximizing Your Impact During the NACo Legislative Conference

CONTENTS:

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

- STEP 1
- STEP 2
- STEP 3
- STEP 4
- STEP 5
- STEP 6
- STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

ADVOCACY 101

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

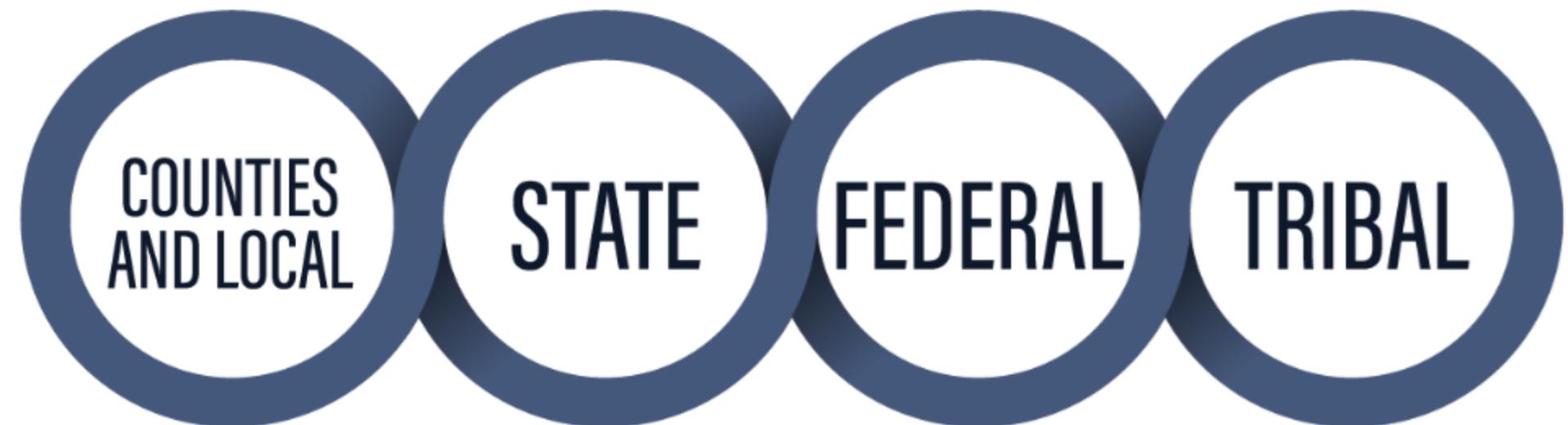
STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

As we enter the 119th Congress, counties have a critical opportunity to elevate national priorities, share community needs, and educate federal partners on the essential role counties play as intergovernmental partners, implementors, and co-regulators of federal policies and regulations.



EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

NACo Support for Your Advocacy Efforts

The NACo 2026 Legislative Conference provides a unique opportunity for you to meet with your members of Congress while in Washington, D.C. **By understanding who you plan to meet with, what topics you intend to raise, and any resources or guidance you may need, NACo can better assess where county relationships currently stand and offer targeted assistance to help you prepare.**



*Scan the QR code to complete
NACo's Advocacy Engagement Form
for the 2026 Legislative Conference*

STEP 1: Prepare Before Engaging: Know Your Federal Priorities

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Before contacting Capitol Hill, anchor your message in NACo's federal agenda and your county's needs.

NACo 2026 Federal Policy Priorities

NACo Policy Briefs

NACo County Explorer



STEP 1: Prepare Before Engaging: Know Your Federal Priorities

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Identify Your Top 2–3 Issues: Member offices respond best to concise, actionable requests.

- Prioritizes funding for counties in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization
- Reform FEMA policies to speed reimbursements and increase transparency
- Pass the SPEED Act to protect counties' land use, zoning and siting authority from federal and state preemption
- Support long-term SRS reauthorization and mandatory funding for PILT for FY 2026 and beyond
- Expand behavioral health treatment capacity by increasing the number of Medicaid-eligible beds in county-operated facilities through the Michelle Alyssa Go Act.
- Support the Housing for the 21st Century Act in the full House
- Provide funding and protect county authority on local cybersecurity needs

STEP 2: Reach out to Congressional Offices

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Identify Your Top 2–3 Issues: Member offices respond best to concise, actionable requests.

Who to Ask For

- When calling or emailing request:
 - A meeting with the Member, if available
 - Otherwise, a meeting with the Legislative Assistant (LA) who handles your issue

Best Practices

- Reach out early
- Suggest a specific time window (“I’m in DC Feb. 21-24; are you available to meet between 1–4pm?”).
- Keep emails short and include:
 - Who you are (and what county you represent)
 - Your top 1–2 issues
 - Why they matter right now
 - A request for a meeting

STEP 3: Tell Your County Story

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY
PRIORITIES

Congressional staff remember stories, not statistics—but stories backed by data have the greatest impact.

Three Steps for an Effective Story

- 1. Set the local context:** Describe your county—population, geography, budget pressures, major industries.
- 2. Describe the problem:** How does a federal policy, regulation, funding deadline or program challenge affect your county and residents?
- 3. Explain the impact if Congress acts:** Quantify using NACo County Explorer data
 - “Our county maintains 1,100 road miles...”
 - “Our EMS call volume has increased 29 percent in five years...”
 - “We have only 2 mental health beds per 100,000 residents...”



STEP 4: Make a Clear, Actionable Ask

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY
PRIORITIES

Every advocacy meeting should include one direct request.

Examples include:

- “Will the Senator support a three-year Secure Rural Schools extension?”
- “Can the Congressman weigh in with FEMA on our outstanding reimbursements?”
- “Will the Senator introduce companion legislation to the House-passed SPEED Act?”
- “Will the Congressman support the 21st Century Act to support my county’s housing efforts?”

STEP 5: Know Your Way Around Capitol Hill

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

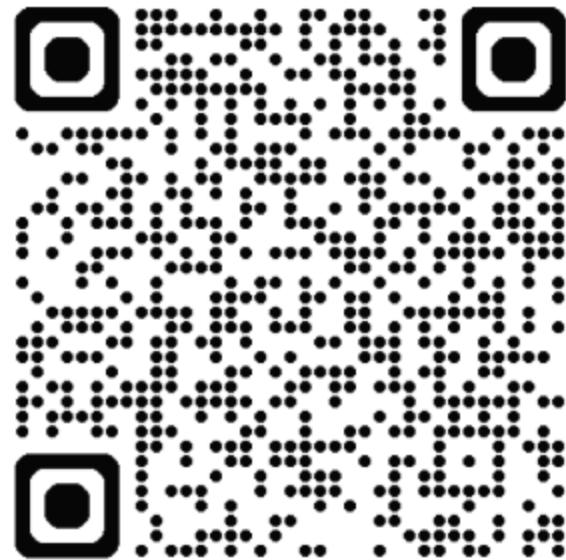
STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Navigating the Capitol complex makes your meetings smoother.

U.S. House Buildings
(Cannon, Longworth, Rayburn)

U.S. Senate Buildings
(Hart, Dirksen, Russell)



STEP 6: Follow Up Immediately

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STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY

PRIORITIES

It is imperative that you follow up with your Member's office after your meeting.

After your meetings:

- Send a short thank-you email
- Re-state the request you made
- Attach any NACo one-pagers or county data
- Offer yourself as an ongoing resource

STEP 7: Stay Engaged Year-Round

Your voice carries weight because you represent local government.

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Maintain contact:

- Invite Members or staff to visit your county to discuss challenges and opportunities – **Keep NACo informed!**
- Participate in NACo fly-ins, policy steering committees and webinars
- Keep NACo updated on your advocacy efforts by reaching out to our Government Affairs team



Scan the QR code to see how you can get involved in NACo

Priorities to Advocate For at NACo Leg Conference

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 7

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

NACo is releasing an Advocacy Toolkit ahead of the Legislative Conference outlining which priorities county leaders should speak with their Representatives and Senators about.

- Surface Transportation Reauthorization
- Disaster Reform
- Permitting Reform
- Mandatory funding for PILT & long-term reauthorization of SRS
- Michelle Alyssa Go Act
- Housing for the 21st Century Act
- Federal Support for Local Cybersecurity Needs



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