



NACo POLICY INSIDER

Understanding the Federal Landscape for Counties

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

HOUSING REFORM

The U.S. House passed their landmark housing reform bill, the Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644), by a vote of 390-9.

- Expands eligible uses and modernizes the HOME Program
- Expands eligible uses and increases annual reporting of CDBG
 - The bill DOES NOT tie CDBG allocations to local housing production levels – this provision is included in the Senate’s companion legislation
- Streamlines unit inspection requirements for HUD programs
- Increases access to rural housing tools

What’s next?

- Senate is expected to consider their housing package – ROAD to Housing – this month
- House and Senate will need to negotiate differences



*Scan for NACo’s blog on
Housing for 21st Century Act*

ELECTIONS LEGISLATION



The U.S. House had a major focus on elections legislation this week.

- On Feb. 11, the House passed the SAVE Act (H.R. 22), which would impact counties:
 - Requiring counties to collect and verify documentary proof of citizenship for federal voter registration
 - Establishing a uniform federal framework
 - Expanding verification, compliance and enforcement responsibilities
 - Implementing new requirements without defined timelines
- On Feb. 10, the House Administration Committee held a mark-up on the MEGA Act, which has similar impacts on counties



Scan for NACo's blog the SAVE Act

FARM BILL

The U.S. House Agriculture Committee is slated to unveil the 2026 Farm Bill tomorrow.

- House Agriculture Committee leadership is planning to unveil text of the 2026 Farm Bill **TOMORROW**
- The Farm Bill has been operating under multiple short-term funding resolutions since it was last reauthorized in 2018
- Farm Bill is projected to include the following:
 - Farm Safety Net
 - Conservation
 - Rural Development
 - Forestry and Public Lands
- Mark-up of the Farm Bill is expected for Feb. 23



*Scan for NACo's Farm Bill
Reauthorization Hub*

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

- Congress working on drafting the next surface transportation reauthorization package, which will replace the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.
- Committee leaders in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate are continuing to work in a bipartisan manner to develop base text, in advance of likely mark-ups this spring.
- NACo has been strongly focused on reaching out to staff on both sides of the aisle and in both Chambers of Congress to share key county priorities.
- These priorities include increased county access to formula funding, the retention and improvement of discretionary grant programs, better project delivery and implementation and more.



*Scan to view NACo's Surface
Transportation Reauthorization Hub*

The Bipartisan **BASICS Act** – Introduced!

- Due to strong advocacy from NACo, the bipartisan ***Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act*** was introduced this week by Rep. Bresnahan (R-Pa.-08) and Rep. McDonald Rivet (D-Mich.-08).
- This bill was drafted with input from NACo and reflects key county priorities like:
 - Growing the suballocated portion of the Federal-aid highway program, putting more dollars in locals' hands.
 - Improves project selection authority for urban, suburban and rural areas alike.
 - Builds capacity for rural counties to access federal formula dollars



Scan to download a template letter in support of the BASICS Act that you can send to your member of Congress

The Bipartisan *BASICS Act* – Bridges

- Continues bridge formula funding, which was a key pillar of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.
- However, the BIL's formula bridge program's "concession" to locals was a 15-percent off-system bridge set-aside.
- This treats off-system bridges as synonymous with locally owned bridges, but this is a false equivalence.
 - States own many off-system bridges, and counties and cities own many on-system bridges
- Additionally, there was little opportunity for local input on **which** off-system bridges got funded.
- The BASICS Act would suballocate, not set aside, 25 percent of bridge funding. This would be a 66% increase in funding for locals, and ensure they can choose where dollars go.



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