

NACo LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

2018 Farm Bill in the 115th Congress

July 2018



NACo Legislative Analysis: 2018 Farm Bill in the 115th Congress

Introduction

As the governing authority over the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the farm bill is critical for counties who are responsible for delivering and administering vital services to many of our nation's vulnerable families. From clean water and broadband infrastructure to nutrition assistance and energy conservation – the farm bill helps all of America's counties provide a strong foundation for a better tomorrow.

After weeks of uncertainty, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2), a five-year, \$860 billion farm bill reauthorization package. The razor-thin party-line vote (213-211) was a result of unanimous opposition from Democrats over significant changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Strong opposition from House conservatives also held up the chamber's approval of the bill, and ultimately forced House leadership to take up unrelated immigration reform bills before passing a farm bill that could be sent to the Senate for consideration.

On Thursday, June 28, the Senate amended and replaced the House package, passing a revised \$867 billion farm bill package on a definitively bipartisan basis (85-11). While the Senate bill generally maintains the structure of current law, the House bill makes significant changes to most farm bill provisions. Specifically, the House bill would eliminate certain conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and cut the conservation title by \$800 million over the next ten years. Under the rural development title, the House bill would create new authorizations for the Secretary of Agriculture to address emerging rural health crises and forecast speed standards for rural broadband loans.

With the current farm bill set to expire September 30, 2018, the Senate and House must move quickly to finalize a package that can be supported by both chambers. With the Senate's final passage, Congressional leadership must now appoint a conference committee to iron out differences between the two packages. Once a final package has been written, both chambers must consider and pass the conferenced bill before expiration of current law.

NACo is working closely with Congress to ensure the priorities of America's counties are reflected in the final legislation. To help understand the potential impacts to key provisions within both titles, NACo has developed this side-by-side analysis of both bills. For more information on the farm bill and its impact on county governments, please visit NACo's Farm Bill 101.

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2018 Farm Bill Analysis

A side-by-side comparison of the multi-year omnibus reauthorizations that governs agriculture, nutrition, conservation, energy and rural development programs

FARM BILL TITLE	PROGRAM/ISSUE	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	HOUSE H.R. 2 - Agriculture & Nutrition Act of 2018	SENATE S. 3042 - Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018	NACo American Counties Platform
COMMODITY	Supplemental Agriculture Disaster Assistance	The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather or by attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government. LIP payments are equal to 75 percent of the average fair market value of the livestock	The House bill would expand the livestock indemnity program to cover death or sale loss as a result of diseases that are not able to be controlled by vaccination or other measures.	The Senate bill would add an Indian tribe or tribal organization (as those terms are defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act - 25 U.S.C. 5304) as an eligible producer. The Senate bill would also allow coverage under the Livestock Indemnity Program of unweaned livestock which have not been vaccinated and require a reimbursement of 75 percent of the losses for beginning farmers, ranchers and veterans under the Tree Assistance Program.	NACo urges Congress and the administration to pass disaster assistance aimed at farmers during times of drought and abnormal precipitation.
CONSERVATION	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.	The House bill would reauthorize the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through FY 2023 and increases the total CRP enrollment cap to 29 million acres (up from 24 million acres) by the end of 2023.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through FY2023 and increases the maximum acreage enrolled to 25 million acres.	NACo recognizes the need to protect our nation's most environmentally sensitive lands and waters. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Conservation Security Program (CSP) and others are important sources for technical assistance and are needed to help communities implement many important conservation measures.

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CONSERVATION	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Both EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to help plan and implement conservation practices addressing natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.	The House bill would increase mandatory funding for EQIP to \$3 billion (up from \$1.75 billion) per year over the life of the farm bill. Additionally, this provision would eliminate the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which is the largest conservation program in the United States with over 70 million acres enrolled.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Environmental Quality Incentives Program through 2023 and allocates at least 50 percent of the funds for practices relating to livestock production including grazing. It would also limit contracts for wildlife practices at no more than 10 years, creates a floor for the amount of payment made in advance for certain producers and requires those advanced funds advanced to be expended within 180 days or be returned to the Secretary, and allows for an opt-out on advance payment.	NACo supports USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the valuable technical assistance their field offices provide. The NRCS plays a critical role for counties by addressing local conservation issues pertinent to county governments as well as Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Conservation Security Program (CSP) and others are important sources for technical assistance and are needed to help communities implement many important conservation measures.
CONSERVATION	Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program	The VPA-HIP helps state and tribal governments increase public access to private lands for wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing, nature watching or hiking.	The House bill would provide \$50 million in mandatory funding for the voluntary public access and habitat incentive program (VPA-HIP) between fiscal years 2019 through 2023.	The Senate bill would merge the conservation innovation grant authority with the voluntary public access and habitat incentive program authority and authorizes a \$25 million setaside of the funds made available for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for the period of FY 2019-2023 for the voluntary public access program.	NACo supports continuation of the enhanced federal tax deduction for donations of conservation and trail easements to facilitate their use by counties, special districts and other units of local government as a land planning, conservation and management tool. Additionally, NACo encourages the creation of partnerships between the public and private sectors, such as the "adopt-a-park" program, to supplement government's ability to develop and deliver recreational services and facilities.

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CONSERVATION	Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program	The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program helps units of federal, state, local and tribal of government (project sponsors) protect and restore watersheds up to 250,000 acres. This program provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the states and their political subdivisions to work together to prevent erosion; floodwater and sediment damage; to further the conservation development, use and disposal of water; and to further the conservation and proper use of land in authorized watersheds.	The House bill would extend the authorization of appropriations for the small watershed rehabilitation program at the current level of \$85 million a year through fiscal year 2023. The bill also includes a new section that would provide an additional \$100 million in mandatory funding for the purposes of carrying out programs under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program is currently funded at \$150 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would authorize the watershed protection and flood prevention act at \$200 million annually through 2023. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program is currently funded at \$150 million for FY 2018.	Management of watersheds, wetland areas and coastal watersheds address public health and safety, environmental protection and restoration issues within hydrologically defined geographic areas. Local governments make critical front-line land use decisions balancing these important considerations while achieving sustainable economies. Counties must be involved in all aspects of planning and management. NACo supports expanded federal funding and increased flexibility for planning and implementation of watershed management at the local level and for the restoration of wetlands, repair of habitat, coordination of stormwater management programs with comprehensive watershed management efforts, and establishment of native vegetation on lands vital to water quality.
CONSERVATION	Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program	This program would help counties protect critical habitats from damage stemming from feral swine.	The House bill establishes a pilot project for eradication and control of feral swine. Additionally, this provision requires coordination between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service with State Technical Committees to determine the pilot areas for the project.	The Senate bill does not include the provision.	Wildlife can damage private and public property, including agricultural crops, livestock, forests, pastures and structures. NACo supports USDA Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Service (WS) programs and encourages Congress and the administration to provide necessary resources to strengthen these programs. NACo also opposes efforts to weaken WS programs, including efforts to decrease funding and change authorized abilities to cooperate with counties and other entities needing assistance.
CONSERVATION	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	This program helps counties protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses through Agricultural Land Easements. The program also helps provide habitats for fish and wildlife, improve water quality, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.	The House bill would authorize \$500 million to ACEP per year over the life of the farm bill. Additionally, the bill clarifies that nonagricultural uses that do not negatively impact the agricultural operation or conservation values of the property would be allowed under ACEP. The program is currently funded at \$250 million.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the program at \$450 million per fiscal year and clarifies that one of the purposes of the program is to limit non-agricultural uses of land that may negatively impact agricultural uses and values. Additionally, the bill amends the definition of "eligible land" and eliminates the cash requirement on non-federal shares. Additionally, the bill would require an eligible entity to develop an agricultural land easement plan with the landowner that meets certain descriptions and requirements as a condition of assistance. The program is currently funded at \$250 million.	NACo is concerned about the loss of productive farmland to nonagricultural uses because of increasing development. NACo urges Congress and the USDA to support measures to retain, protect and improve agricultural land and conserve topsoil consistent with local land use policies and controls. An important aspect of the conservation process is the maintenance of financial and technical assistance to establish practical methods to protect farmlands for American farm families and retain farmland to maintain stable production of farm commodities.

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CONSERVATION	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	The RCPP helps create partnerships between public and private sectors to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales.	The House bill would provide \$250 million in mandatory funding each fiscal year from 2019 through 2023. Additionally, the provision would add "resource conserving crop rotations" and the "protection of source water for drinking water" to this list of eligible activities. The program is currently funded at \$330.5 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the program and clarifies that grant agreements under section 1271C(d) are included as partnership agreements and that the program is established through program contracts with eligible producers to carry out conservation activities. The program is currently funded at \$330.5 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the valuable technical assistance their field offices provide. The NRCS plays a critical role for counties by addressing local conservation issues pertinent to county governments as well as Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Additionally, NACo supports federal incentives that reward American agriculture for the implementation of best management practices that protect the environment.
CONSERVATION	Promoting Water Quality and Protecting Drinking Water	This provision would help counties address water quality issues while promoting and incentivizing successful water conservation practices.	The House bill would require the Secretary of Agriculture to promote water quality and water quantity practices that protect drinking water. The new subsection requires collaboration with community water systems and offers increased incentives and higher payment rates for practices resulting in environmental benefits. Additionally, the House bill authorizes 10 percent of the funding under this title to be reserved for addressing the goals of this provision.	The Senate bill does not include this provision.	NACo recognizes the need to protect our nation's most environmentally sensitive lands and waters. NACo recognizes that the availability of an adequate supply of clean water is vital to our nation. NACo supports integrated and cooperative programs for protecting water quality that place responsibility on each level of government. Because the elimination of water pollution is a long-term process limited by economic and social costs, a reasonable relationship between costs and benefits should be a key consideration toward reaching the goal of improved water quality throughout the nation.
TRADE	Market Access Program (MAP)	Through the Market Access Program (MAP), FAS partners with U.S. agricultural trade associations, cooperatives, state regional trade groups and small businesses to share the costs of overseas marketing and promotional activities that help build commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural products and commodities.	The House bill would create the International Market Development Program (IMDP), a consolidation of the current Market Access Program, the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program, the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program and the E. (Kika) De La Garza Emerging Markets Program. The provision authorizes \$225 million for each fiscal years 2019 through 2023 for the IMDP – equal to the collective total of all combined programs. Additionally, the House bill would repeal the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program, the Export Assistance Program for Specialty Crops and the Emerging Markets Program.	The Senate bill would consolidate the Market Access Program, the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program, the E. (Kika) De La Garza Agricultural Fellowship Program, and Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops to create a new Priority Trade Promotion, Development, and Assistance program.	NACo believes that the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in world markets would be enhanced by the removal of certain barriers to trade in some foreign markets and by the termination of subsidies by foreign competitors. 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.

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NUTRITION	Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)	The SFMNP provides grants to states and tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers' markets, roadside stands and community-supported agriculture programs.	The House bill would reauthorize the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) through 2023. The program is funded at \$19.2 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would extend the authorization for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program through FY 2023. The program is funded at \$19.2 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports the promotion of healthy diets, including strengthening incentives and infrastructure to encourage more fruit/vegetable production. Incentives and infrastructure include better access to fresh foods, investment programs promoting healthy food, expansion of programs that help communities invest in retail markets and food-based businesses and increasing access to farmers markets. NACo also supports farm-to-school programs that bring fresh, locally grown food into school lunch programs.
NUTRITION	Healthy Food Financing Initiative	HFFI helps bring grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to underserved urban and rural communities across America.	The House bill would extend the existing authorization of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$1 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would extend the existing authorization of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, and allows both retailers and enterprises to be eligible for loans and grants. Additionally, the bill requires entities accept benefits under SNAP. The program is currently funded at \$1 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports the promotion of healthy diets, including strengthening incentives and infrastructure to encourage more fruit/vegetable production. Incentives and infrastructure include better access to fresh foods, investment programs promoting healthy food, expansion of programs that help communities invest in retail markets and food-based businesses and increasing access to farmers markets. NACo also supports farm-to-school programs that bring fresh, locally grown food into school lunch programs.
NUTRITION	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [Funding]	SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.	Due to the major provisions included in the House bill, SNAP benefits would be cut by more than \$20 billion over 10 years. The program is currently funded at \$70.6 billion for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would provide level funding for SNAP at \$70.6 billion.	NACo supports the current SNAP entitlement program and funding structure, including maintaining the 50 percent federal administrative match for states given that counties contribute to the administrative costs of the SNAP program in county-administered states. SNAP should not be block granted, since such a policy change would place additional strain on both recipients and state and local governments.

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NUTRITION	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [Eligibility]	SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.	The House bill restricts severely the flexibility counties have in determining categorical eligibility by using other benefits or services an individual receives as a proxy for SNAP eligibility and makes more difficult the ability to deduct utility bills when determining benefit levels.	The Senate bill maintains current program eligibility.	NACo encourages Congress to increase the options available to state and local administrative bodies in streamlining applications and administrative processes. Local social services departments see many individuals and families that are eligible for multiple programs, but requirements are often slightly different for each program, generating significant work for staff and applicants alike. All states should be allowed to seamlessly enroll Supplemental Security Income (SSI) participants in the SNAP program. In general, as additional programs are streamlined, barriers to entry for participants should be reduced, and Congress and states should not make the most restrictive elements of each program the qualifications required for approval.
NUTRITION	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [Work Requirements]	SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.	In place of the two set of work requirements - general and those for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) - the House bill proposes a new unified work requirement across SNAP. The bill would establish a single work standard for all nondisabled adults ages 18 to 59, requiring them to hold at least a part-time job within just one month of receiving SNAP benefits. This proposal demonstrates an increase from the original age threshold of 18 to 49 years of age, and decrease the grace period from three-months into one month for SNAP recipients to find work without being penalized. In addition, the bill states that ABAWDs between the ages of 18 and 59 must work or be enrolled in a job-training program for at least 20 hours a week beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. By FY 2026, that minimum number of hours would increase to 25 hours per week.	The Senate bill would maintain existing work requirements for SNAP recipients, including hourly work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). Under current law, adults ages 18 to 49 who are not pregnant, disabled or otherwise exempt are required to work at least a part-time job or agree to take a job if it is offered to them. An additional set of work requirements applies to childless adults ages 18 to 49, also known as ABAWDs, who lose benefits if they are unable to find a job within three months of becoming eligible for SNAP benefits.	NACo opposes arbitrary and counterproductive work and participation requirements and supports a strong county role in mutually negotiated outcome measures in which states are judged by their progress toward achieving agreed upon goals. NACo supports greater flexibility in the SNAP work requirements in order to allow counties and states to meet the individual needs of their caseloads.

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NUTRITION	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) [Employment & Training]	SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.	The bill proposes a massive expansion of state education and work programs. The plan budgets \$1 billion per year, after a two-year phase-in period, to fund the expansion, which is an increase from the current \$90 million per year. The new proposal also mandates that unemployed working-age SNAP recipients enroll into these programs, and that states are required to provide a training slot for all SNAP recipients subject to the work requirement. Exceptions are made for pregnant women, people with disabilities and parents with children younger than six years of age. Under current law, states are not mandated to providing work training programs for SNAP every recipient. As of 2017, only five states – Colorado, Delaware, Michigan, South Dakota and Texas – partake in this sort of commitment to work training.	The Senate bill would provide additional funding for and allow additional states to participate in SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) demonstration pilots. This would create more opportunities to gather data on best practices around helping SNAP participants obtain and maintain employment. Specifically, the bill calls for an additional \$185 million to conduct employment and training pilot projects that “target individuals 50 years of age or older, formerly incarcerated individuals or individuals in a substance abuse treatment program.” Additionally, the bill proposes increased collaboration between state SNAP agencies and state and local workforce development boards.	NACo supports enabling individuals to find and secure long-term employment and encourages Congress to acknowledge the reality that for time-limited assistance to be successful, it must be accompanied by adequate federal and state funding for a wide range of supportive services. The SNAP E&T program should receive more realistic funding levels from the federal government to ensure states and counties have the proper resources to assist individuals in finding work and remaining employed, including increasing the reimbursement rate, since SNAP E&T is an employment program. SNAP E&T should also be further integrated with existing workforce programs at the federal, state and local level, including local workforce development boards.
CREDIT	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Program	The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers.	The House bill would authorize appropriations of \$5 million for the program – a cut of more than \$13 million – for each fiscal year through fiscal year 2023. The program is currently funded at \$18.7 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the program to provide \$12 billion in loans (\$4 billion for direct loans and \$8 billion for indirect loans) each year through FY 2023. The program is currently funded at \$18.7 million for FY 2018	To keep the integrity of the family farm in place and in turn the fiscal solvency of many counties dependent upon agriculture, NACo supports the beginning farmer loan program. NACo also supports incentives, such as low-interest loans and tax credits, to be provided to young people entering farming and agribusiness in rural areas.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program	This program helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. Eligible applicants include most entities that provide education or health care through telecommunications, including counties and federally-recognized tribes.	The House bill would increase the authorization of appropriations to \$82 million per fiscal year and reauthorizes the program through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$32 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would set aside 20% of Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant funding for applications related to substance use disorder treatment services while reauthorizing the program through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$32 million for FY 2018.	Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine, long distance education, attraction of quality economic development and improved wages and employment. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Hard-To-Reach Broadband Grant Program	This program would help deploy high-speed internet to unserved communities with low population density	The House bill also includes a new section that authorizes a new grant program for borrowers under Title I, II or VI of the Rural Electrification Act who are financing rural broadband projects that provide retail service. The section establishes a density formula (less than 12 service points per linear mile of "roadway") to qualify for certain grant amounts. The section provides that applicants which meet certain density thresholds are eligible for a grant with an increasing percentage of the total award.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine, long distance education, attraction of quality economic development and improved wages and employment. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Gigabit Program/Innovative Broadband Advancement Program	This pilot program would help deploy high-speed internet in unserved communities through grants and/or loans to eligible entities for demonstrating innovative broadband technologies or methods of broadband deployment that significantly reduce the cost of broadband deployment.	The House bill would replace the Rural Gigabit Network Pilot Program with the Innovative Broadband Advancement Program and authorizes the program from 2019 through 2023. Eligible applicants must decrease the cost of broadband deployment and substantially increase broadband speed to not less than the 20-year broadband speed established by the Rural Utilities Service. Additionally, awardees must complete the project buildout within five years of the date of funding award - the previous pilot program provided only three years. The previous pilot program was authorized at \$10 million annually.	This provision was not included in the Senate bill.	Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America. NACo believes all levels of government should work cooperatively with the private sector, nonprofits and academia to develop robust awareness, adoption and use programs for broadband.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program	The Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program provides funding for rural projects through local utility organizations. USDA provides zero-interest loans to local utilities which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas.	The House bill would authorize the program at \$10 million – a cut of almost \$45 million – each year through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$55 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would provide \$5 million in mandatory funding for the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program and authorizes an additional \$5 million in discretionary spending for years 2022 and 2023. This represents a cut of over \$45 million as the program is currently funded at \$55 million for FY 2018.	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. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Strategic Economic and Community Development Program	This program was created in the 2014 Farm Bill to incentivize regional collaboration on economic development projects.	<p>The House bill would reauthorize the Strategic Economic and Community Development Program. Additionally, this provision would require the Secretary provide technical assistance to communities in developing strategic community investment plans and authorizes \$5 million for each fiscal year until 2023 for the purposes of carrying out technical assistance. Additionally, the bill would expand the provision to cover all programs under USDA Rural Development. The House bill adds additional eligibility requirements including a “multi-sectorial” component to any multi-jurisdictional project. The program is currently funded at \$5 million for FY 2018.</p>	<p>The Senate bill would reauthorize the program at \$5 million dollars for each fiscal year 2019 through 2023. Additionally, the bill would expand the provision to cover all programs under USDA Rural Development. The Senate bill adds additional eligibility requirements including a “multi-sectorial” component to any multi-jurisdictional project. The program is currently funded at \$5 million for FY 2018.</p>	<p>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. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA’s economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.</p>
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Broadband Loans and Grants	<p>The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) houses two broadband assistance programs to fund and finance broadband deployment: the Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program and the Community Connect Grant Program. Additionally, the Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program funds broadband deployment in rural areas. Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants—while not principally supporting connectivity—fund equipment and software that operate via telecommunications to rural end-users of telemedicine and distance learning applications.</p>	<p>The House bill would allow for up to 10% of any Rural Development grant, loan, or loan guarantee be used to fund broadband facilities and service. Additionally, the House bill would increase the population limit for funding eligibility under USDA’s rural broadband guaranteed loans program from 20,000 to 50,000.</p>	<p>The Senate bill would allow for up to 10% of any Rural Development grant, loan, or loan guarantee be used to fund broadband facilities and service. Additionally, the Senate bill would provide RUS the authority to refinance telephone and broadband loans.</p>	<p>Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine, long distance education, attraction of quality economic development and improved wages and employment. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.</p>

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Water, Waste Disposal and Wastewater Facility Grants	The Water and Wastewater Program helps counties fund and finance critical water infrastructure and provide rural communities access to clean, affordable water.	The House bill would increase the maximum amount allowable for revolving fund awards for financing water and wastewater projects to \$200,000 (up from \$100,000), while decreasing the authorization of appropriations to \$15 million (down from \$30 million) for each fiscal year and would reauthorize the program until 2023.	The Senate bill would increase the maximum amount of financing an eligible entity can receive to fund water and wastewater projects to \$200,000 (up from \$100,000), while also reauthorizing the Revolving Funds for Financing Water and Wastewater Projects Program through 2023.	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. NACo calls for a reliable, long-term and substantially increased federal investment in water infrastructure, watershed protection and the protection of water resources and facilities from physical and chemical security threats.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Program	This program provides technical assistance to rural water systems experiencing day-to-day operational, financial or managerial issues. Rural water system officials may request assistance from the Rural Utilities Service, or Rural Utilities Service staff may request assistance on behalf of the system.	The House bill would also increase the authorization of appropriations for the Circuit Rider Program to \$25 million (up from \$20 million).	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Program at \$25 million for each year 2019 through 2023.	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. NACo calls for a reliable, long-term and substantially increased federal investment in water infrastructure, watershed protection and the protection of water resources and facilities from physical and chemical security threats.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Business Development Grants Program	This program supports targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and have fewer than \$1 million in gross revenue.	The House bill reauthorizes the Rural Business Development Grants Program until 2023. The program was authorized at \$64 million each year under the 2014 Farm Bill and is currently funded at \$34 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Rural Business Development Grants program at \$65 million each year (unchanged from 2014 Farm Bill) 2019 through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$34 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports the mission of the USDA and encourages it to focus on expanding the competitiveness of American agriculture and supporting rural businesses and industries that enhance rural development and quality of life in rural communities. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Cooperative Development Grants Program	The Rural Cooperative Development Grants Program helps rural communities create and expand new markets and products through strategic investments.	The House bill reauthorizes the Rural Cooperative Development Grants Program until 2023. The program is currently funded at \$8.8 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Rural Cooperative Development Grants program through 2023 with minor technical changes regarding cooperative research agreements. The program is currently funded at \$8.8 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports the mission of the USDA and encourages it to focus on expanding the competitiveness of American agriculture and supporting rural businesses and industries that enhance rural development and quality of life in rural communities. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Locally or Regionally Produced Agricultural Food Products Program	The program, under USDA's Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program, is designed to help facilitate the production, processing and distribution of locally and regionally produced agricultural food products.	The House bill would reauthorize the Locally or Regionally Produced Food Products program until 2023. The program is currently funded at \$46 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Locally or Regionally Produced Agricultural Food Products Program through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$46 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurship programs and facilities that process, distribute and develop value-added products using locally-grown commodities purchased from local farmers to meet the demand for local, healthy food. Additionally, NACo supports local food producers that sell direct to consumers and calls on USDA and FDA to continue providing outreach and technical assistance to these producers to ensure that they are implementing best practices in food safety.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Economic Area Partnership Zone (REAP Zone) Program	The REAP Zone program was established in the 2014 Farm bill to address constraints in economic activity and growth, low density settlement patterns and stagnant employment in rural communities.	The House bill would reauthorize the Rural Economic Area Partnership Zone (REAP Zone) program until 2023. The program is currently funded at \$46.7 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Rural Economic Area Partnership Zone (REAP Zone) program until 2023. The program is currently funded at \$46.7 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports holistic approaches to rural development, such as the Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP). By incorporating elected county and municipal officials, businesses and non-profits in a multi-county region, the program would allow multiple sectors a chance to chart the future of their community. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program	RMAP provides loans, grants and technical assistance to non-profits and tribal governments assisting entrepreneurs in rural communities.	The House bill would eliminate all mandatory funding (\$2.8 million) and reduce the discretionary authorization to \$4 million for each fiscal year until 2023. The program is currently funded at \$2.8 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would increase the minimum percentage of funding an eligible microenterprise development organization can receive in technical assistance grants, while reauthorizing the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program at \$20 million per year 2019 through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$2.8 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports the mission of the USDA and encourages it to focus on expanding the competitiveness of American agriculture and supporting rural businesses and industries that enhance rural development and quality of life in rural communities. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide increased funding for local capacity and technical assistance. NACo also supports improved coordination of the USDA's economic development programs at the state, regional and local levels. Federal agencies should be required to recognize and follow county and regional development plans developed by local and elected officials.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Rural Investment Stronger Economy (RISE) Grant Program	This program would help counties strengthen the local economy through job accelerator partnerships with the private sector and institutions of higher education.	The House bill did not include this provision.	The Senate bill would create the RISE Grant Program and authorize it through fiscal year 2023.	County officials should exercise strong leadership in creating a supportive environment for business investment by: promoting diversified economies; creating, rehabilitating and maintaining support infrastructure; providing quality education and training; and involving the non-profit and private sectors. Economic development efforts benefit counties through the retention and creation of jobs, the broadening of county tax bases, and the improvement of the overall quality of life.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development	This interagency council would help leverage federal resources aimed at rural counties.	The House bill did not include this provision.	The Senate bill would authorize the interagency council through fiscal year 2023.	NACo also supports the intent of the White House Rural Council to bring forward the perspectives of rural counties.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Delta Regional Authority	The regional authorities make strategic investments of federal appropriations into the physical and human infrastructure of regional communities.	The House bill would reauthorize the Delta Regional Authority but would reduce the authorized appropriation to \$12 million per fiscal year until 2023. The authority is currently funded at \$30 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the Delta Regional Authority through 2023.	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.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Northern Great Plains Regional Authority	The regional authorities make strategic investments of federal appropriations into the physical and human infrastructure of regional communities.	The House bill would reauthorize the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority but would reduce the authorized appropriation to \$2 million (down from \$20 million) for each fiscal year until 2023.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	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.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Bio-Based Markets Program	The Bio-based Markets Program aims to assist in the development and expansion of markets for bio-based products. The program was created by the 2002 Farm Bill and expanded as part of the 2014 Farm Bill.	The House bill would authorize \$2 million in discretionary spending per fiscal year through 2023. Additionally, the section would prohibit other federal agencies from placing limitations on procurement of wood products. The program was funded at \$3 million for FY 2018	The Senate bill reauthorizes the program at \$3 million for each year 2019 – 2023. move the program from Departmental Management to the Rural Development mission. The program was funded at \$3 million for FY 2018.	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 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. NACo supports the definition of biomass from Titles I & III of the 2008 Farm Act. NACo supports and encourages the further use, including government policies which foster the development, of woody biomass energy sources, like wood chips and wood pellets, because they are reliable, and renewable, and carbon neutral consistent with established and well-supported science.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Improving Health Outcomes	This provision would help address rural health crises by leveraging existing programs and resources.	The House draft bill includes a new section that would allow the Secretary to address emerging rural health crises by providing renewable, one-year, temporary reprioritization for certain rural development loan and grant applications to assist rural communities in responding to a specific rural health emergency. Specifically, a designation would trigger priority funding for projects under USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program, Community Facilities Program and the Rural Health and Safety Education Program. The provision requires the Secretary to issue an announcement that specifies the emergency, and to provide notice to the relevant congressional committees and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	Over the last decade, devastating and highly addictive drugs have spread across the country, especially in rural counties, most notably methamphetamine and opioids. NACo urges Congress and the administration to commit more resources to fight these harmful epidemics. Additionally, investing in wellness and prevention across all communities will result in better health outcomes, increased productivity and reduce costs associated with chronic diseases.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Rural Health Liaison	This provision would help promote rural health resources throughout the federal government aimed at rural communities across the country.	The House bill did not include this provision.	The Senate Farm Bill includes the Rural Health Liaison Act which would create a liaison within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) responsible for working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and other agencies on rural health issues.	Over the last decade, devastating and highly addictive drugs have spread across the country, especially in rural counties, most notably methamphetamine and opioids. NACo urges Congress and the administration to commit more resources to fight these harmful epidemics. Additionally, investing in wellness and prevention across all communities will result in better health outcomes, increased productivity and reduce costs associated with chronic diseases.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Establishing Broadband Standards	This provision would create a minimal acceptable standards of broadband speeds for funding eligibility.	The House bill would require the Secretary to establish a current minimum acceptable standard of broadband service, as well as projecting minimum acceptable standards of service for 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 years into the future. The section further prohibits the Secretary from making any loan to finance a project that cannot meet the projected minimum acceptable standard of service equal to the length of the loan. This section also allows the Secretary and the applicant to agree to substitute standards if the standards are cost-prohibitive to meet. Finally, it would provide the Secretary the authority to require, for the lifetime of the loan, that the project is capable of meeting either the minimum standard currently in effect or the projected standard in place at the time the loan was agreed to.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine, long distance education, attraction of quality economic development and improved wages and employment. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Smart Utility Authority for Broadband	This provision would provide counties the flexibility in funding to address broadband-related issues pertaining to ongoing economic development projects.	The House bill would allow a recipient of a grant, loan or loan guarantee provided by the Office of Rural Development to use up to 10 percent of the grant towards rural broadband infrastructure projects. This provision requires funds under this section to be used only in an area that is not being provided with the current minimum acceptable level of broadband service.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	Advanced telecommunications are critical to the economic vitality of rural America. The lack of broadband infrastructure in rural communities has severely impaired the potential of rural communities to attract and retain new businesses. Increased deployment of advanced technology has major implications for rural counties including improved healthcare services through telemedicine, long distance education, attraction of quality economic development and improved wages and employment. NACo supports congressional and administrative action that hastens the deployment of high-speed broadband technology in rural America.
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	*NEW* Definition of Rural	This provision would prevent rural counties with regional jails, and prisons from exceeding funding/financing eligibility under USDA's current population caps.	The House draft bill includes a new provision that would exclude incarcerated populations from the determination of whether an area qualifies as "rural" for program eligibility for USDA Rural Development program funding. Counties with regional jails are more likely to exceed population caps for certain USDA Rural Development program funding – this amendment would help alleviate the problem by excluding those incarcerated individuals from total population counts on USDA Rural Development funding applications.	The Senate bill did not include this provision.	
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Biomass Crop Assistance Program	BCAP provides financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial private forest land who wish to establish, produce, and deliver biomass feedstocks.	The House bill would reauthorize the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) at \$25 million per fiscal year through 2023.	The Senate bill extends the program to include algae as an eligible material and clarifies material harvested for the purpose of hazardous woody fuel reduction qualifies for matching payments, while reauthorizing the program at \$20 million each year from 2019 to 2023.	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 farmers that are struggling with low prices for their crops and increased costs of production. 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.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT HORTICULTURE	Value-added Producer Grant Program	The VAPG Program provides grants to agricultural producers wishing to undertake projects that add value to their commodities and increase the producer's income.	[Rural Development Title] The House bill would decrease the authorization of appropriations for the Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) Program to \$50 million per fiscal year through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$58.5 million for FY 2018.	[Horticulture Title] The Senate bill combines the authority for value-added agricultural market development program grants and the farmers' market and local food promotion program. Grant functions would continue to be administered through Rural Development and Agriculture Marketing Service, respectively. One feature of the grant program would support partnerships to plan and develop a local or regional food system. Requires certain grant recipients to report the impact on farmers and businesses. Additionally, the bill provides \$60 million in mandatory funding and \$20 million in discretionary funding each year from 2019 to 2023. The program is currently funded at \$58.5 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurship programs and facilities that process, distribute, and develop value-added products using locally-grown commodities purchased from local farmers to meet the demand for local, healthy food.
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	Nutrition Education Program	The Nutrition Education Program enables low-income individuals and families to engage in nutritionally sound food purchase and preparation practices.	The House bill would eliminate the Nutrition Education Program.	The Senate bill reauthorizes the Nutrition Education Program through 2023.	NACo supports the promotion of healthy diets, including strengthening incentives and infrastructure to encourage more fruit/vegetable production. Incentives and infrastructure include better access to fresh foods, investment programs promoting healthy food, expansion of programs that help communities invest in retail markets and food-based businesses, and increasing access to farmers markets. NACo also supports farm-to-school programs that bring fresh locally grown food into school lunch programs.
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	USDA Extension Services	USDA's Extension Service helps counties expand the competitiveness of American agriculture and support businesses and industries that enhance economic development and quality of life in rural and urban communities.	The House bill would reauthorize USDA Extension Services through fiscal year 2023.	The Senate bill would reauthorize USDA Extension Services through 2023.	Research and extension activities that address the constantly changing economic and technical changes in agriculture are strongly supported by NACo. That includes placing a higher priority on research regarding alternative uses of agricultural products and identification of potential new uses including specialty markets that provide opportunities for agricultural entrepreneurs. NACo reaffirms the importance of the work of the outreach programs and calls on federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and private sector interests; non-profit organizations; and colleges and universities to maintain their support.

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RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	National Food Safety Training, Education, Extension, Outreach, and Technical Assistance Program	The program provides grants to promote food safety standards, guidance, and protocols. Grants awarded through this program help facilitate the integration of food safety standards and guidance with a variety of agricultural production and processing systems, including conventional, sustainable, organic and conservation and environmental practices.	The House bill would reauthorize the National Food Safety Training, Education, Extension, Outreach and Technical Assistance Program through fiscal year 2023. The program is currently funded at \$7 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would reauthorize the National Food Safety Training, Education, Extension, Outreach and Technical Assistance Program through fiscal year 2023. The program is currently funded at \$7 million for FY 2018.	Across the country, counties partner with federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and private sector interests; non-profit organizations; and colleges and universities to fund community outreach and educational initiatives. NACo reaffirms the importance of the work of the outreach programs and calls on federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and private sector interests; non-profit organizations; and colleges and universities to maintain their support.
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program	The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers.	The House bill would authorize the USDA Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements, make structural changes to the authorization, and add various priority areas to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. It also would reauthorize mandatory funding of \$20 million (unchanged from 2014 Farm Bill) each fiscal year through 2023. the program is currently funded at \$18.7 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would merge the authorization for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant Program and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Rancher and Veteran Farmer and Rancher Program into a new section titled the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program. Sets award amount for grants made through these programs at \$250,000 for a maximum of three years, and requires peer review of applications. Additionally, the bill would provide \$50 million in mandatory funding and \$50 million in discretionary funding through fiscal year 2023. The program is currently funded at \$18.7 million for FY 2018.	To keep the integrity of the family farm in place and in turn the fiscal solvency of many counties dependent upon agriculture, NACo supports the beginning farmer loan program. NACo also supports incentives, such as low-interest loans and tax credits, to be provided to young people entering farming and agribusiness in rural areas.
FORESTRY	*NEW* Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program	Wood Innovations Grants funding supports traditional wood utilization projects, expands wood energy markets, and promotes using wood as a construction material in commercial buildings.	The House bill would establish the Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation competitive grant program. State and local governments may apply for a 35 percent competitive federal grant to establish a thermal energy system for a building, such as a library or courthouse powered by woody biomass, or for the construction of an innovative wood product facility, such as a processing plant or mill that produce building components constructed with mass timber, wood products derived from nanotechnology and other products derived from low-quality wood. The bill would authorize \$25 million per year for fiscal years 2019-2023.	The Senate bill establishes a wood innovation grant program to promote research and development of innovative wood products. The Secretary may provide grants to carry out this work as long as those recipients provide an amount of non-federal funds equal to the amount of the Federal contribution.	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 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. Additionally, NACo supports and encourages the further use, including government policies which foster the development, of woody biomass energy sources, like wood chips and wood pellets, because they are reliable, and renewable, and carbon neutral consistent with established and well-supported science.

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FORESTRY	Resource Advisory Committees	A Secure Rural Schools Resource Act Advisory Committee (RAC) provides recommendations to the Forest Service on the development and implementation of special projects on federal lands as most recently reauthorized under the Secure Rural Schools Act and Community Self-Determination Act in Public Law 115-141.	The House bill would extend the authorization for Resource Advisory Committees (RAC) to fiscal year 2023, and would reduce the minimum size of a RAC from 15 members to 9. The original authorizing language for RACs guarantees counties and other local governments a seat on a RAC, and this bill would empower RACs by reducing the required membership to derive a quorum.	This provision was not included in the Senate bill.	NACo urges Congress to amend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act to exempt Resource Advisory Committees from adherence to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and to allow the Chief of the Forest Service to delegate appointment of citizens to Resource Advisory Committees to the appropriate Regional Forester or Forest Supervisor. Additionally, NACo should advocate for other innovative solutions, such as thresholds on populations or budget amounts, exemptions for certain entities or quorum requirements in certain circumstances, a reduction in the size of RACs, and extension of the terms, or some combination to permanently address the inability of some RACs to meet due to lack of a quorum.
FORESTRY	*NEW* Title II Self-Sustaining Resource Advisory Committee Projects	A Secure Rural Schools Resource Act Advisory Committee (RAC) provides recommendations to the Forest Service on the development and implementation of special projects on federal lands as most recently reauthorized under the Secure Rural Schools Act and Community Self-Determination Act in Public Law 115-141.	The House bill would create a new program through which the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service will choose 10 RACs to propose projects on federal lands that accomplish forest management objectives or support community development and generate receipts. This would grant RACs greater authority in forest management projects, and allow them to reinvest receipts generated by their projects to improve forest health.	This provision was not included in the Senate bill.	NACo urges Congress to amend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act to exempt Resource Advisory Committees from adherence to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, and to allow the Chief of the Forest Service to delegate appointment of citizens to Resource Advisory Committees to the appropriate Regional Forester, or Forest Supervisor. Additionally, NACo should advocate for other innovative solutions, such as thresholds on populations or budget amounts, exemptions for certain entities or quorum requirements in certain circumstances, a reduction in the size of RACs, and extension of the terms or some combination to permanently address the inability of some RACs to meet due to lack of a quorum.

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FORESTRY	*NEW* Cross-Boundary Wildfire Mitigation	This program helps counties address the threat of wildfires through grants aimed at removing hazardous fuel on landscapes that cross geographic boundaries.	The House bill would create a new grant program to conduct hazardous fuel removal on landscapes that cross federal, state, county and private property. Additionally, the bill would exempt the prohibition on exporting dead or dying Ponderosa pine, Sugar pine, Jeffrey pine and lodgepole pine trees harvested from national forests in California. Finally, the House bill would establish a voluntary pilot program for perform vegetation management projects on National Forest System lands within or near utility rights-of-way.	The Senate bill establishes a grant program to State foresters to carry out hazardous fuel reduction projects across landscapes on Federal and non-Federal land. The provision requires state foresters to consult with owners of state, county, tribal and private landowners to carryout out crossboundary hazardous fuels reduction projects. The Senate bill authorizes \$20 million annually each year through 2023.	NACo supports forest health initiatives to address the threat of catastrophic events to our public forest and rangeland resources. Federal land management agencies shall utilize an appropriate mix of management practices and increased private, local and state contracts and partnerships for pre-fire management, effective fire suppression and restoration of federal forest and rangelands. Counties support expanded forest management activities on public lands to reduce the threat of wildfire. Local governments oftentimes provide manpower to combat wildfires, as well as emergency services during and after a fire, and manage public health impacts from smoke inhalation and water contamination.
HORTICULTURE	Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program	The Farmers' Market Promotion Program helps counties increase access to locally and regionally produced agricultural products and develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations.	The House bill would extend the authorization of appropriations for the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program and would increase the authorized level to \$30 million a year for fiscal years 2019 through 2023. The program is currently funded at \$28 million for FY 2018.	The Senate bill would combine the authority for the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program with the Value-added Agricultural Market Development Program grants. Grant functions would continue to be administered through Rural Development and Agriculture Marketing Service, respectively. One feature of the grant program would support partnerships to plan and develop a local or regional food system. Requires certain grant recipients to report the impact on farmers and businesses. The bill would provide \$60 million in mandatory funds for FY 2019 and into the future, and would authorize \$20 million for FY 2019 and each year thereafter. The program is currently funded at \$28 million for FY 2018.	NACo supports investments in infrastructure, entrepreneurship programs and facilities that process, distribute, and develop value-added products using locally-grown commodities purchased from local farmers to meet the demand for local, healthy food. Additionally, NACo supports local food producers that sell direct to consumers and calls on USDA and FDA to continue providing outreach and technical assistance to these producers to ensure that they are implementing best practices in food safety.
CROP INSURANCE	Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)	The CCC helps stabilize, support, and protect farm income and prices.	The House bill would decrease funding for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) from \$12.5 million to \$8 million for fiscal year 2019 and each subsequent fiscal year. The CCC is currently funded at \$14 billion for FY 2018.	The Senate bill reauthorizes the Commodity Credit Corporation authority at \$12.5 million each year through FY 2023. The CCC is currently funded at \$14 billion for FY 2018.	NACo supports expansion of the crop insurance program to include additional crops, livestock and poultry. Additionally, NACo supports an examination by Congress and the Administration into the declining revenue to agriculture producers from food sales while there has been no reduction in the cost of food.

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CROP INSURANCE	Treatment of Forage and Grazing Under Federal Crop Insurance Act	The Federal Crop Insurance Act was designed to help agricultural interests recover from the impacts of natural disasters. To encourage participation, the act provides a subsidy equal to 30 percent of the crop insurance premium limited to the dollar amount at 65-percent coverage.	The House bill would amend the Federal Crop Insurance Act to include crops and grasses used for grazing under catastrophic risk protection plans.	The Senate bill would amend section the Federal Crop Insurance Act to provide additional support for a member of an Indian tribe for the first purchase of pasture, rangeland, and forage insurance.	NACo urges Congress and the Administration to pass disaster assistance aimed at farmers during times of drought and abnormal precipitation. NACo supports expansion of the crop insurance program to include additional crops, livestock and poultry. Additionally, NACo encourages Congress to provide a subsidy for hay production to assist agriculture communities, prevent soil erosion and improve water quality.
MISC.	Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers	The Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers program provides education and outreach to minority and limited-resource farmers and ranchers.	The House bill would reauthorize \$10 million in mandatory funding for each fiscal year through 2023 and would reauthorize discretionary appropriations of \$20 million for each fiscal year through 2023. The bill would also prioritize projects that deliver agricultural education and provide agricultural employment or volunteer opportunities to youth in underserved and underrepresented communities.	The Senate bill would merge the authorization for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant Program and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Rancher and Veteran Farmer and Rancher Program into a new section titled the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program. The bill sets the award amount for grants made through these programs at \$250,000 for a maximum of three years, and requires peer review of applications. The bill also provides \$50 million in mandatory funding for FY 2018 and beyond, and authorizes \$50 million each year through 2023.	NACo supports 'agribility' programs within USDA that help physically challenged farmers in their agricultural duties. To keep the integrity of the family farm in place and in turn the fiscal solvency of many counties dependent upon agriculture, NACo supports the beginning farmer loan program. NACo also supports incentives, such as low-interest loans and tax credits, to be provided to young people entering farming and agribusiness in rural areas.
MISC.	National Flood Insurance Program	The National Flood Insurance Program aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners, renters and businesses and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations. These efforts help mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. Overall, the program reduces the socio-economic impact of disasters by promoting the purchase and retention of general risk insurance, but also of flood insurance, specifically.	This provision was not included in the House bill.	The Senate bill would extend the National Flood Insurance Program through January 31, 2019.	NACo urges congressional committees of jurisdiction to include local and state stakeholders in the process of drafting legislation to craft an affordable and sustainable reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program. NACo's positions on the following issues are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing National Flood Insurance Program Solvency and Sustainability • Enhancing Flood Insurance Affordability and Accessibility • Reducing Premium Costs Through an Agreed Value Pilot Program • Providing Private Market Access, Accountability and Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernizing Flood Mapping and Flood Risk Accuracy • Enhancing National Flood Insurance Program Transparency and Accountability