

2019 NACo

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

NACo works to preserve local decision making, to protect counties from unfunded mandates and local preemption and to strengthen the federal-state-local partnership.





# 2019 NACo LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## PROMOTE COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES IN A COMPREHENSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE PACKAGE:

NACo supports efforts by the administration and Congress to increase our nation's infrastructure investments to help promote economic development, public safety and overall mobility. Any federal infrastructure package should reflect county priorities, such as: allocating more federal seed capital and matching funds for locally owned infrastructure, increasing local decision-making authority and flexibility, and streamlining and shortening the federal permitting process while still requiring robust public participation and world-class environmental stewardship.

## PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH, TREATMENT FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM:

NACo supports sensible measures that promote and advance the overall safety of the public. Within this context, we also support new policies and approaches that would enhance the ability of county officials and our partners to prevent and treat mental health and substance use disorders, both in the community and within the confines of the criminal justice system. Furthermore, NACo supports policies and programs that divert non-violent individuals struggling with mental illness and/or substance use disorders from local jails into more appropriate treatment programs. NACo also supports legislation requiring states to suspend, rather than terminate, an individual's eligibility for certain federal health benefits upon arrest, including Medicaid and veterans' benefits.

## BOOST BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY WHILE PRESERVING LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY:

NACo supports the deployment and availability of emerging technologies, such as small cell 5G, to all areas of the nation to ensure equitable economic and educational opportunities for all. By preserving the long-standing, existing local zoning authorities of counties and other local governments in the deployment process, counties can ensure that the public interest is being served by communications providers regardless of the delivery platform. County officials can also fulfill our responsibilities as trustees of public property and as protectors of public safety and welfare during this deployment process. NACo urges Congress and federal agencies to recognize counties as co-regulators, providers and partners in extending the benefits of advanced telecommunications and broadband technology — including improvements to county emergency preparedness and response systems — to all Americans. Federal policymakers should support local decision-making and accountability of local elected officials and should oppose any actions that would preempt or limit the zoning and siting authority of local governments.

COUNTIES OWN **46 PERCENT** OF ALL PUBLIC ROAD MILES

COUNTIES OWN **38 PERCENT** OF THE NATIONAL BRIDGE INVENTORY

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN **78 PERCENT** OF THE NATION'S PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AND **ONE-THIRD** OF PUBLIC AIRPORTS

APPROXIMATELY **8.5 MILLION ADULTS** HAVE BOTH A **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

**10.6 MILLION INDIVIDUALS** CYCLE IN AND OUT OF MORE THAN **3,000 LOCAL JAILS** EACH YEAR

**20 PERCENT OF JAIL INMATES** HAVE A SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

COUNTIES OWN AND SUPPORT **903 HOSPITALS** AND OPERATE **1,943 LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS** ACROSS THE COUNTRY

IN RURAL AREAS, **JUST 68.6% OF RESIDENTS** HAVE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET ACCESS VIA BOTH FIXED WIRELESS SERVICES AND MOBILE LTE BROADBAND

APPROXIMATELY **14 MILLION RURAL AMERICANS AND 1.2 MILLION AMERICANS LIVING ON TRIBAL LANDS** STILL LACK ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED MOBILE LTE BROADBAND





# 2019 NACo LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## **SUPPORT THE PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILT) AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS (SRS) PROGRAMS:**

NACo supports restoring full mandatory funding for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which compensates public lands counties for untaxable federal land. NACo also supports extending the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program as a transitional funding mechanism until the federal government fully implements a sustainable, long-term forest management program with adequate revenue sharing for forest counties and schools.

## **SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FARM BILL:**

NACo supports the recent long-term reauthorization of the Farm Bill that will help counties provide critical investments in our nation's most under-served communities. As part of the Farm Bill implementation, NACo supports full funding for all Farm Bill titles, which help strengthen our nation's rural infrastructure (including broadband and water and wastewater systems), protect our nation's food supply, increase access to healthy food for low-income populations through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and promote environmental stewardship and conservation.

## **ESTABLISH A MORE EFFECTIVE DEFINITION OF WATERS OF THE U.S.:**

NACo believes that local streets, gutters and human-made ditches should be excluded from the definition of "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS) under the federal Clean Water Act. NACo calls on Congress and the administration to develop and implement a new, more practical WOTUS definition in consultation and collaboration with state and local governments.

## **PROMOTE ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY ACROSS ALL COUNTIES:**

NACo supports federal investments and policies that help advance and leverage both regional and local strategies focused on serving those most in need, including those addressing the root causes of poverty. While national economic indicators are strong, many communities – defined both as geographic places and as certain demographics – lag the overall national performance. Counties are confronting increased demand and caseloads for workforce skills training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, public hospital services (including county-run hospitals and clinics), child protective services and elder care. At the same time, county governments are increasingly burdened and restricted by mounting federal and state mandates, limitations and oversight. To meet these challenges, counties need a strong federal partner committed to achieving better outcomes through local decision-making, flexibility and accountability.

**61.6 PERCENT OF COUNTIES** HAVE FEDERAL LAND WITHIN THEIR BOUNDARIES

**PILT AND SRS SUPPORT CRITICAL COUNTY SERVICES**, INCLUDING EMERGENCY SERVICES, SEARCH AND RESCUE, FIRE PROTECTION, FOREST MAINTENANCE, EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

BETWEEN 2009 AND 2016, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LEVERAGED OVER **\$187 BILLION IN LOANS AND GRANTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

IN 2017, MORE THAN **40 MILLION INDIVIDUALS** RECEIVED SERVICES SUPPORTED BY SNAP

MORE THAN **70 PERCENT OF COUNTIES** INVEST IN STORM SEWER SYSTEMS, SEWAGE DISPOSAL, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND WATER UTILITIES

**COUNTIES INVEST \$23.9 BILLION** IN SANITATION, STORM AND WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS

COUNTIES INVEST OVER **\$58 BILLION IN HUMAN SERVICES** EACH YEAR

**TWO-THIRDS OF COUNTIES HAVE POVERTY RATES** ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING THAN THEIR PARENTS FELL FROM APPROXIMATELY 90% FOR CHILDREN BORN IN 1940 TO 50% FOR CHILDREN BORN IN THE 1980s.

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## ABOUT NACo

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government, and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.

Each year, NACo's Board of Directors adopts the association's federal policy priorities, which help shape NACo's advocacy efforts on behalf of America's counties.

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