

# 2019 POLICY BRIEF

## SUPPORT KEY COUNTY PRIORITIES AS CONGRESS IMPLEMENTS THE 2018 FARM BILL

### QUICK FACTS

- The farm bill contains programs that assist counties in rural development efforts, nutrition assistance programs, conservation initiatives, renewable energy deployment, support for new farmers and ranchers, and business development initiatives
- The 2018 farm bill expanded the Strategic and Community Development program – championed by NACo – which helps incentivize regional collaboration in economic development
- The 2018 farm bill enacted in December 2018 largely left the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) intact and preserved existing work requirements while expanding certain SNAP employment and job training programs

### ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to support county priorities throughout the implementation of the 2018 farm bill. Programs throughout the farm bill help counties make critical investments in infrastructure, economic development, nutrition and conservation. Preserving these programs is vital to the strength of our local and national economy.

The legislation, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ([P.L. 115-334](#)), will expire at the end of FY 2023. NACo testified before the U.S. House Agriculture Committee during the bill's development, securing authorization of several programs of interest to counties, and continues to work to preserve county priorities.

### BACKGROUND:

On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed into law a five-year reauthorization of the farm bill. The president's signature comes after a bipartisan group of legislators worked for months to resolve disagreements between the two farm bills passed by the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. The final five-year, \$867 billion reauthorization will help support county economies and provide critical investments to rural and underserved communities.

Throughout the farm bill process, county leaders helped draft bill text and amendments to preserve and promote key county priorities. Specifically, the final package creates a new Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) grant program, reinstates the Undersecretary for Rural Development and codifies the interagency Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development.

Additional provisions include language that would allow counties with regional jails to exclude incarcerated individuals from population caps for funding eligibility under U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs and a provision that allows counties to use USDA broadband loans and grants for middle-mile projects, which had been prohibited.

The nutrition title of the farm bill, which includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and accounts for roughly 75 percent of overall spending in the bill, was the biggest hurdle for Senate and House negotiators to overcome as they came to an agreement on a final bill. In the end, the final package maintained existing eligibility and work requirements for SNAP, while expanding job training and other SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) programs originally authorized in the 2014 farm bill.



## KEY COUNTY PROVISIONS UNDER 2018 FARM BILL

### Under the Rural Development title:

- **Sec. 6101** sets aside 20 percent of financial assistance for telemedicine for projects aimed at addressing the opioid crisis.
- **Sec. 6202** allows counties to use USDA broadband loans and grants for middle-mile projects.
- **Sec. 6306** creates an interagency Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development to maximize the impact of federal investment on rural communities.
- **Sec. 6401** expands the Strategic Economic and Community Development program and allows the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to prioritize regional community development plans.
- **Sec. 6403** doubles the allowable size of water, waste disposal and wastewater facility grants from to \$200,000, but cuts the total program authorization in half to \$15 million per year.
- **Sec. 6424** creates a new Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) grant program to help counties grow through partnerships with the private sector and institutions of higher education.

### Under the Nutrition Title:

- **Sec. 4005** protects the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) by maintaining existing eligibility and work requirements for SNAP recipients. The bill also contains reforms that will encourage and prioritize job training activities.

### Under the Forestry Title:

- **Sec. 8624** reauthorizes good neighbor authority and expands it to allow counties and tribes to enter into forest restoration agreements with the

U.S. Forest Service, while ensuring any payments do not negatively impact those provided through other federal lands payments programs.

### Under the Miscellaneous Title:

- **Sec. 12407** requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reestablish the position of Undersecretary for Rural Development, outlining a permanent, mandatory position that is not subject to administrative reorganizations.

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