



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 13, 2018

CONTACT: Brian Namey, bnamey@naco.org

Counties Applaud Farm Bill Passage

Key county victories achieved in rural development, nutrition, conservation

WASHINGTON – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today applauded the bipartisan passage of the Farm Bill, a five-year, \$867 billion reauthorization that will help support local economies and provide critical investments in rural and underserved communities.

“The Farm Bill passage represents several key victories for America’s counties,” said NACo Executive Director Matthew Chase. “This legislation provides investments in our communities that will help to foster economic growth, promote nutrition for underserved populations and facilitate broadband deployment, especially in rural areas.”

NACo worked with partners on Capitol Hill to preserve and promote county priorities. The final package creates a new Rural Innovation Stronger Economy grant program, reinstates an Undersecretary for Rural Development position and codifies the interagency Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development.

The package also includes language to help counties address the crippling opioid epidemic through USDA’s Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program.

“We are pleased to see Congress dedicate significant resources to help counties combat the opioid epidemic through creative telemedicine platforms that are often necessary to provide increased access in rural counties and address the stigma associated with treatment for substance use disorders,” said NACo Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee Chair Melissa McKinlay, a Palm Beach County, Fla. commissioner.

Additional provisions allow counties with regional jails to exclude incarcerated individuals from population caps for funding eligibility under USDA Rural Development programs and enable counties to use USDA broadband loans and grants for so-called middle-mile projects, which is prohibited under current law.

The nutrition provision, which accounts for roughly 75 percent of overall spending within the package, preserved the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Cuts to this program could have resulted in more than two million individuals losing or seeing a reduction in their benefits.

“We encourage President Trump to sign this comprehensive, bipartisan package and stand with counties that are leveraging the Farm Bill’s important programs and resources,” concluded Chase.

For more information, click [here](#).

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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

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES | 660 NORTH CAPITOL ST., N.W. SUITE 400 | WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001 | 202.393.6226 | FAX 202.393.2630 | WWW.NACO.ORG



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