

# 2018 POLICY BRIEF

## MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

### QUICK FACTS

- USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill
- USDA Rural Development operates programs that provide grants and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development
- Some key USDA Rural Development Programs include the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS); the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS); and the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS)

### ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your Members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2018 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2017 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments to key rural county priorities.

### BACKGROUND:

USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs that are critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.

On May 5, 2017 the president signed an omnibus spending package that included \$2.94 billion in total budget authority for USDA's rural development, an increase of \$265 million over FY 2016 funding levels. In the FY 2017 omnibus, rural development programs also saw slight increases or maintained funding levels.

NACo encourages Congress to maintain funding levels at or above FY 2017 levels as Congress considers appropriations for FY 2018.

Below is a breakdown of FY 2017 funding levels:

#### Under the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS):

- **Water and Waste Disposal Programs:** \$1.25 billion for the Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program. This program helps rural communities address the backlog of clean water and waste disposal projects.
- **Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program:** \$690 million for the Rural Telecommunications Program, unchanged from enacted FY 2016 levels, and \$27.04 million for Broadband Direct Loans representing a \$4 million increase from enacted FY 2016 levels.

#### Under the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS):

- **Rural Communities Facilities Program:** \$2.6 billion for the Rural Community Facilities Program, representing an increase of \$400 million from enacted FY 2016 levels. This program helps fund rural hospitals, schools, and health clinics.
- **Housing Insurance Fund Program:** \$1 billion for the Single-Family Housing Program, representing an increase of almost \$1 million from the enacted FY 2016



levels. This program helps provide affordable housing to underserved families in rural communities.

**Under the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS):**

- **Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program:** \$42 million dollars for the Rural Business Development Grant Program. This represents an increase of \$12.25 from enacted FY 2016 levels and the president's initial budget request. Additionally, the omnibus included \$26.55 for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants. These programs help rural communities create and expand new markets and products through strategic investments.

**KEY TALKING POINTS**

- USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs that are critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.
- Urge your Members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2018 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2017 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments to key rural county priorities.

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