Community, Economic and Workforce Development: Proposed Policy Resolutions and Platform Changes

National Association of Counties (NACo)

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HOUSING
Under Subsection C. The Federal Role in Housing; No. 13 Homeless Assistance (third paragraph)

<u>NACo strongly supports retaining Housing First as a best practice approach to homeless assistance that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness.</u> NACo also calls for an end to the practice of discharging large numbers of people into homelessness from hospitals, mental health and chemical dependency treatment facilities, jails and prisons without adequate community support systems. NACo commits to urging Congress to make investments in additional affordable and supportive housing alternatives from mainstream systems, so that supportive housing is available to those who are homeless or would be homeless without it.

Sponsor(s): Claudia Tuck, Director, Community Support Services, Alachua County, Fla.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Resolution on Protecting the Health and Safety of Sober Home Residents

Issue: Local governments continue to see a proliferation of sober homes within their boundaries and need additional clarity from the federal government on how they can protect the health and safety of sober home residents through reasonable regulations.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports further U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) clarification on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA) to allow local governments to enact reasonable regulations to protect the health and safety of sober home residents.

NACo also supports federal legislation to establish patient protection and best practices for sober homes.

Background: Sober homes have proliferated with little oversight or standards in place to protect the vulnerable residents living in them. Numerous cases of fraud, abuse, and human trafficking have been reported. In 2016, at the urging of Congresswoman Lois Frankel (D, FL-21), the DOJ and HUD released a Joint Statement clarifying how local governments can implement zoning and land use policies regarding sober homes. Still, questions over the interpretation of the ADA and FHA have slowed local government efforts to protect their residents. Further clarification of these laws to allow local governments greater flexibility to regulate sober homes to protect the health and safety of sober home residents, as well as the establishment of national best practices and standards for sober homes, is essential.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2018, also known as CARA 2.0, creates best practices for operating recovery housing. The Recovery Home Certification Act of 2018 would impose national standards for the protection of vulnerable residents being exploited by disreputable sober home operators.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: With additional regulatory control and required national standards, local governments could potentially significantly reduce the number of emergency calls produced by sober homes, thus saving lives and reducing costs to taxpayers.

Sponsor(s): Melissa McKinlay, Mayor, Palm Beach County, Fla.

Proposed Resolution to Maintain Current Funding for HUD-VASH Vouchers for Homeless Veterans in FY 2019 Budget

Issue: Support federal funding for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to maintain current funding for the HUD-VASH voucher program for homeless veterans at a level of not less than $40 million for FY 2019.

Background: The HUD-VASH program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA provides these services for participating Veterans at VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outreach clinics (CBOCs).

Every year since 2008, HUD and the VA have awarded HUD-VASH vouchers based on geographic need and public housing agency (PHA) administrative performance. The allocation process for HUD-VASH vouchers is a collaborative approach that relies on three sets of data: HUD's point-in-time data, VAMC data on the number of contacts with homeless veterans, and performance data from PHAs and VAMCs.

HUD has awarded $75 million of annual funding for approximately 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers each year in 2008-2010 and 2012-2015. Congress appropriated $50 million in 2011 to serve approximately 7,000 voucher families and $60 million in 2016 to serve approximately 8,000 families; $40 million was appropriated in FY 2017 and FY 2018 to serve approximately 5,000 families. Since 2008, approximately 90,000 vouchers have been awarded.

HUD estimated that, as of January 2016, 39,471 veterans were homeless, which represented a 46 percent decline in veteran homelessness since 2009.

Under the CEWD Sections of NACo's 2017-2018 Platform NACo supports: "14. Initiative to End Veteran Homelessness: NACo supports the goal of ending homelessness among veterans and military families, including using temporary assistance and shelter resources to assist with permanent housing placement. NACo strongly recommends the continued appropriation of resources through the Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grant program, and the Grants and Per Diem program to accomplish this goal." (page 23).

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Reducing funding from a level of $40 million will have a dramatic impact on our veterans (and their families) who face homelessness. Despite progress in the recent decade, approximately 40,000 veterans remain homeless and in need of immediate help in cities, counties and rural areas across the nation.

Sponsor(s): Martha Schrader, Commissioner, Clackamas County, Ore.; Rod Runyon, Commissioner, Wasco County, Ore.; Stan Primozich, Commissioner, Yamhill County, Ore.; Pat Farr, Commissioner, Lane County, Ore.

Proposed Resolution on FY 2019 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Issue: Support FY 2019 appropriations for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to support the following levels of funding for core U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs in the FY 2019 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill: no less than $3.5 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula funding; no less than $1.5 billion in formula funding for the HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME); no less than $2.6 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants, including at least $270 million for the Emergency Solutions Grant program plus an amount to fully fund expiring supportive housing and Shelter Plus Care rent subsidy contracts; full funding for existing Section 8 project-based and tenant-based contracts; $40 million for HUD-VASH and $500 million in Section 108 Loan Guarantee authority.

In addition, NACo opposes the imposition of a funding threshold to receive CDBG and HOME Investment Partnerships program funds directly, or the revision of "grandfathering" provisions that would remove participating jurisdictions from future funding eligibility.

Background: The CDBG and HOME programs have been model federal block grant programs for improving the nation's crumbling infrastructure, expanding affordable housing opportunities and undertaking neighborhood revitalization. Despite the success of these programs, CDBG funding has declined by 49 percent and HOME by 55 percent since 2000, which has severely hampered the ability of local governments to foster sustainable and economically resilient communities.

Local governments use CDBG funds for critical urban and rural improvement activities, infrastructure improvements, and human resource development programs, including: road construction; installation of water-and-sewer systems: expanding homeownership opportunities; eliminating slum and blight; employment training; business and job creation; transportation services; services at libraries, community centers, adult day care and child and after school care facilities; homeless housing assistance; and crime awareness programs. According to HUD, every $1 million in CDBG funding supports approximately 26 jobs, and since 2005, CDBG program resources have created over 300,000 jobs—thus proving that the program has been a catalyst for economic growth and has helped local officials leverage funds for community needs. Now more than ever before, local governments need an increase in CDBG funding to give communities the ability to address their infrastructure and economic development needs.

For counties across the nation, the HOME program is vital to increasing home-ownership and expanding the availability of affordable rental housing. Since 1990, HOME funds have produced over one million units of housing. HUD indicates that each dollar of HOME funding leverages an additional $4 in other public and private funding. Every $1 billion in HOME funding creates or preserves more than 17,000 jobs. Despite the good performance, HOME funding has been cut in half since 2010. According to HUD, an estimated 12 million rental and homeowner households now pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes for housing. A family with one full-time worker earning federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States. It is imperative that the HOME program continue to be strengthened and expanded to help American families access decent and affordable housing.

Currently for FY 2018, CDBG is funded at $3.3 billion and the HOME program at $1.36 billion under the FY 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Funding of HUD's core programs is crucial to state and local governments that provide services to communities at the grassroots level.

Sponsor(s): Renee Price, Commissioner, Orange County, N.C.

Proposed Resolution on Preservation and Expansion of Affordable Housing Stock

Issue: Preservation and Expansion of the U.S. Affordable Housing Stock

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports strategies that preserve and expand the supply of housing for low- and moderate-income families. These include:

- The elimination of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) cap, which limits the number of public housing units eligible for conversion under the RAD program to 225,000. Elimination of this cap would promote access to the RAD program for more Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) nationwide and create a more favorable environment to fully maximize the opportunity to preserve and expand affordable housing. Increase the RAD Section 8 Project-Based rental subsidy to equal regular Section 8 Project-Based rental subsidies.

- Fully fund and expand the Public Housing Resident Self-Sufficiency Programs, Family Self Sufficiency (FSS), Resident Opportunity and Supportive Services (ROSS), the Jobs Plus Initiative, and Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration programs funded by HUD that provide tools for Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to promote access to opportunity for the families they serve.

- Release of the MTW Expansion Notice which gives more PHAs access to the MTW program and supports legislation that expands the program for all PHAs.

- Adequately fund HUD’s mainline programs of Section 8 vouchers and public housing.

Background: There are over 1 million Public Housing units subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) nationwide. Public Housing provides income based housing for very low- and extremely low-income families. The Public Housing program is operated locally by entities called Public Housing Authorities (PHA’s). PHA’s serve almost 2 million individuals in low-income households nationwide, and limited funding to provide place-based initiatives that promote their self-sufficiency.
PHA’s have been underfunded for several years which has led to dilapidated housing conditions and limited funding for capital repairs that would preserve housing stock.

The Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program offered by HUD is an opportunity to preserve over 1 million units of Public Housing nationwide. RAD provides a platform for PHA’s to convert their housing stock to a more stable subsidy program and where feasible, the development of mixed income communities, thereby expanding the availability of workforce housing and housing for families on fixed incomes.

The Public Housing Resident Self-Sufficiency Programs, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), Resident Opportunity and Supportive Services (ROSS), the Jobs Plus Initiative, and Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration are all programs funded by HUD that provide tools for Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to promote access to opportunity for the families they serve. Fully funding, and expanding the availability of these existing programs would give PHA’s the tools to assist families who reside in Public Housing to improve their socio-economic status.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: The expansion of affordable housing programs for low and moderate-income families is key to improving the health and success of urban, suburban and rural communities.

Sponsor(s): Wendy Jacobs, Commissioner, Durham County, N.C.; Connie Ladenburg, Council Member, Pierce County, Wash.

Proposed Resolution on Low-Income Housing Tax Credits

Issue: Support an increase in the supply of affordable housing through the expansion of tools such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to increase the allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) by 50 percent and enact a permanent 4 percent credit rate floor for acquisition and bond-financed projects, allowing the program to create and preserve more affordable homes in the United States. Additionally, NACo urges Congress to provide enhancements and increased funding levels to all programs aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Background: The LIHTC program has been one of the most successful tools for boosting private investment in the development and preservation of affordable rental housing in the United States. Created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program has given LIHTC state and local allocating agencies the equivalent of approximately $8 billion in annual budget authority to issue tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. With these funds, approximately 6.5 million low-income households have lived in affordable apartments financed by LIHTC from 1986 to 2013.

Despite the success of this and other housing programs, millions of families still struggle to find decent and affordable housing. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an estimated 12 million renter and homeowner households spend more than 50 percent of their annual incomes on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and will likely have difficulty paying for other necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

Even the nearly 2.2 million households in the U.S. who receive housing vouchers to subsidize their rent face many hurdles or obstacles in finding affordable housing under current market conditions. Families under the Housing Choice Voucher Program must secure an apartment in the private market within sixty days of receiving a voucher. The rents for their apartments must fall within the Fair Market Rent guidelines established by HUD, but for many communities, the Fair Market Rent threshold allows families to rent homes in only a handful of neighborhoods. If a voucher holder fails to find housing at or below the Fair Market Rent amount, they must return the voucher at the end of the 60-day period. In many markets, this has caused high return rates of the vouchers as families are unable to find affordable housing in their communities. New York, for example, has almost a 50 percent return rate due to the lack of affordable housing available to voucher holders. The affordable housing crisis has left low and moderate-income families financially on edge and has compromised their ability to afford food, maintain a stable environment for their children and find and retain employment.

Additionally, the U.S. corporate tax rate drop will likely make investment in LIHTC less appealing. When an investor purchases tax credits from a developer under the LIHTC program, the investor can use those credits to lower his/her annual federal tax bill. If an investor has a lower tax bill, he/she will not be willing to pay as much for these tax credits. Developers will need to sell more credits in order to gain the equity needed for low-income housing projects. Therefore, in order to maintain the production of affordable housing with the LIHTC program under a corporate tax rate cut, more tax credits will need to be allocated.

As affordable housing becomes more difficult to access and rents continue to increase, the creation of more affordable housing units is necessary. With the affordable housing crisis in combination with corporate tax rate cuts, Congress now more than ever should provide the tools and funding necessary to increase the nation’s affordable housing stock. The LIHTC program has been one of the most successful tools for rental housing production, but the current authority available is insufficient to respond adequately to affordable housing needs and increasing demands. An increase in the allocation of LIHTC by 50 percent is critical to preserving and creating more housing options for lower-income households in the United States. Furthermore, a permanent 4 percent credit rate floor for acquisition and bond-financed projects will empower states to allocate more credit equity to properties, provide more efficiency to program administration and offer more predictability to the program.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: The expansion of affordable housing programs is crucial to state and local governments that provide housing to communities at the grassroots level.

Sponsor(s): Patricia Ward, Director, Community Development and Housing Department, Tarrant County, Texas

Proposed Resolution on the New Markets Tax Credit

Issue: Support the reauthorization of the New Markets Tax Credit program in order to promote community development and economic growth by attracting private investment in low-income communities with high unemployment and poverty.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide a permanent extension of the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) and other enhancements to the program to allow for private sector investment and economic growth in low income communities.

Background: The NMTC was authorized through the bipartisan Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000 in order to stimulate investment and economic opportunity in urban and rural low-income communities that lack the resources needed to support businesses, job creation, and a healthy local economy. This important community development tool provides much needed capital to the most distressed communities in the nation by providing a federal tax credit to private investors.

Since its introduction, the NMTC has been an incredibly successful tool for community revitalization projects. Over $42 billion in NMTC investments have leveraged over $80 billion in total investments to community and economic development projects between 2003 and 2015. This investment in low income urban and rural communities generated approximately 750,000 jobs at a cost to the government of less than $20,000 per job. Additionally, these investments are concentrated in the communities with the most need, with 72 percent of NMTC activities located in areas with unemployment rates 1.5 times the national average, poverty rates of at least 30 percent, or a median income at or below 60 percent of the area median.

Furthermore, the NMTC is an exemplary public-private partnership model, allowing local governments, businesses, and investors to come together the make the financing decisions for their community. Rural and urban areas alike use this critical resource to fund small businesses, industrial centers, commercial facilities, daycares, health centers, housing and other mixed-use developments. The NMTC generates a tremendous amount of economic activity through job creation, economic growth, and increased incomes, providing the federal government with a significant return on investment. The program additionally brings in enough tax revenue to cover its cost to taxpayers.

Despite the remarkable success of the NMTC program, the House version of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 eliminated NMTC allocation authority after 2017, meaning the authority previously allocated for years 2018 and 2019 would have been rescinded. Although the NMTC was preserved in the final version of the legislation, this disregard for the program has left the prospect of reauthorization uncertain. A permanent extension and expansion of the NMTC program would provide more certainty to the program and allow for continued community sourced economic growth in underserved areas of the country.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: The permanent extension and expansion of the NMTC program is crucial to state and local governments that provide economic development to communities at the grassroots level.

Sponsor(s): Patricia Ward, Director, Community Development and Housing Department, Tarrant County, Texas

Proposed Resolution on Housing Infrastructure

Issue: Support the inclusion of affordable housing investments in any federal infrastructure package.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to include affordable housing investments in any federal infrastructure package to provide counties with the resources necessary to create and preserve more affordable homes in the United States.

Background: The Trump Administration along with Congressional leadership have introduced infrastructure plans over the last year. Notably missing from these plans is the expansion of affordable housing infrastructure. Affordable housing is a vital component to infrastructure investment, and the construction and preservation of our country's affordable housing stock will strengthen productivity and economic growth, promote economic mobility, and provide greater household stability and improved wellness outcomes.

In order to achieve comprehensive economic impact through infrastructure reform, significant affordable housing investments must be incorporated. The shortage of affordable housing in major U.S. cities costs our economy $2 trillion a year in lower wages and productivity and prevents low-income households from moving to areas with more economic opportunities. A lack of affordable housing access prevents families from increasing their earnings and causes a slower gross domestic product (GDP) growth. It is estimated that between 1964 and 2009, the GDP growth would have been 13.5 percent higher if there were more affordable housing options for families. This translates into a $1.7 trillion increase in income overall and $8,775 in additional wages per worker. Affordable housing infrastructure additionally helps local economies and creates jobs by leveraging public and private funds to increase earnings, increase tax revenue, and put people to work. According to the National Home Builders Association, building just 100 affordable rental homes can generate $11.7 million in local income, $2.2 million in taxes and other revenue, and can create 161 local jobs in the first year of construction.

Moreover, access to affordable housing improves numerous aspects of a family's quality of life. Research shows that when a family has access to affordable housing, there is an increase in their economic mobility. Additionally, children receive numerous benefits from living in an affordable housing community in high opportunity areas. These children earn 31 percent more as adults, live in better neighborhoods as adults, and are less likely to become a single parent. These children also do better in school and have greater opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

There is no community in the United States where a family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage can afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an estimated 12 million renter and homeowner households spend more than 50 percent of their annual incomes on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and will likely have difficulty paying for necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. The problem is likely to exacerbate in the coming years. Analysts expect that over the next ten years over 400,000 new renter households will enter the rental housing market, many of these households being low-income. The pace the rental housing industry is developing new units is significantly slower than the number of rental housing needed in the next ten years, meaning the gap in rental housing supply vs. the demand for rental homes is only going to widen.

Even the nearly 2.2 million households in the U.S. that receive housing vouchers to subsidize their rent have issues finding affordable housing under current market conditions. Families under the Housing Choice Voucher Program must secure an apartment in the private market within sixty days of receiving a voucher. The rent for their apartment must fall within the Fair Market Rent guidelines established by HUD, but for many communities, the Fair Market Rent threshold allows families to rent homes in only a handful of neighborhoods. If a voucher holder fails to find housing at or below the Fair Market Rent amount, they must return the voucher at the end of the 60-day period. In many markets, this has caused high return rates of the vouchers as families are unable to find affordable housing in their communities. New York, for example, has almost a 50 percent return rate due to the lack of affordable housing available to voucher holders. The affordable housing crisis has left low and moderate income families financially on edge and has compromised their ability to afford food, maintain a stable environment for their children, and find and retain employment.

As affordable housing becomes more difficult to access and rents continue to increase, the creation of more affordable homes is necessary. With the affordable housing crisis affecting every state, county, and city in the nation, it is critical now more than ever for Congress to invest in affordable housing infrastructure. These investments will help counties preserve and build up our country's affordable housing stock, strengthen the U.S. economy, and provide more stability to families.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: The investment in the country’s affordable housing infrastructure is crucial to state and local governments that provide housing to communities at the grassroots level.

Sponsor(s): Patricia Ward, Director, Community Development and Housing Department, Tarrant County, Texas

Proposed Resolution on FY 2019 Appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Issue: Support FY 2019 Appropriations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide adequate resources for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and fund the Title I, Title II and III accounts at the levels authorized and listed below:

<u>Title I – Department of Labor</u>

- $861.1 million for Adult Employment and Training Services, $922.2 million for the Youth Activities, and $1.37 billion for Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Services

<u>Title II – Department of Education</u>

- $649.287 million for Adult Education

<u>Title III – Wagner Peyser Employment Services</u>

- $666.413 million for Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES) - current-year levels to give states the additional resources they need to provide WIOA's intensive reemployment services.

In addition, NACo supports only a WIOA formula allocation funding approach. NACo supports local control and investment at the county and municipality level, and rejects any mechanism that gives States more authority than WIOA intends.

Background: The forty percent cuts to workforce training funds for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth and nearly twenty percent cuts to Adult Education funds proposed in President Trump's FY 2019 budget would harm the federal workforce system. Workforce Development Boards serving businesses in communities across the country would be forced to eliminate critical services, disproportionately impacting small to medium sized firms desperate for a skilled workforce.

Cuts of any magnitude at this early point of the WIOA implementation will erase the strides already made. There is a bipartisan focus on economic growth and that can only be realized with a skilled and trained workforce to fill the jobs of today and the future.

WIOA funding is invested through direct consultation with private sector needs in local areas by private sector-led Workforce Development Boards that play a critical role in the promised economic growth under this Administration. Indeed, local boards are the access points of apprenticeship training opportunities.

Access to these services through the federal workforce system allows our businesses to focus on innovation and expansion. The Workforce Development Boards convene the stakeholders across the private and public sector to make the necessary connections to close that noted 'skills gap.' Regarding Employment Services funding:

- An elimination of Employment Service funding is not cost effective – it would result in the average unemployment duration to likely increase by at least one week, costing states' unemployment insurance trust funds to pay out an additional $2.2 billion over the coming year (based on current unemployment levels).
- Business taxes may increase to offset longer UI claims.
- Almost 800,000 veterans would not have job search assistance - the majority of veterans that do not have significant barriers to employment are served through Employment Service staff at the One Stop Centers. The elimination of these staff would mean almost 800,000 veterans would not be served, as well as their spouses, and other job seekers.
- States' ability to assist jobseekers would be dramatically reduced - states' labor exchange systems would be shut down due to lack of funding and reemployment services would be dramatically reduced.
- Over 5.4 million job seekers would not be assisted
- Over 600,000 businesses would not be served
- Over 20,000 employer job fairs would not be provided
- Over 700 American Job Centers would either be closed or detrimentally impacted. State Programs would be most severely impacted by the elimination of Employment Service funding
- Career services to veterans and their spouses would be eliminated
- Assistance to ex-offender programs would be eliminated
- Alternative Youth programs in some states would be eliminated
- Services to businesses would be reduced
- Apprenticeships programs would be reduced

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Funding of WIOA Titles I, II and III services are crucial to state and local governments that provide workforce services to communities at the grassroots level.

Sponsor(s): Mark Jacobs, Director, Workforce Services, Dakota County, Minn.; Orrin Bailey, President, National Workforce Association (NWA); Colorado Counties, Inc.

Proposed Resolution on Registered Apprenticeships Program Flexibility

Issue: Support flexibility for registered apprenticeships, academic and hands-on training.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to provide more flexibility for the Registered Apprenticeships Program to allow for more hours to be achieved through relevant college and workshop classroom instruction, rather than all hours having to be recorded working with a journeyman.

Background: The regulations relating to registered apprenticeships have been in place for 80 years and state that, to be a registered apprentice, you must work 40 hours per week, and all hours of the apprenticeship should be spent under the tutelage of a journeyman. Additionally, during the period of the apprenticeship, a minimum of an additional 144 hours of related instruction must be completed per year.

Many apprentices wish to combine schooling with an apprenticeship and, consequently, work part time and attend college. Employers in the Tampa Bay area (Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties), throughout Florida, and the Nation, would be satisfied with their apprenticeship training being a combination of on the job experience and relevant college and/or hands-on training classes to support the chosen track of their apprenticeship. For example, a Mechatronics Technician needs to have a thorough knowledge of automation and controls technology. Certain aspects of the required training are better taught in a classroom environment, rather than under a journeyman in the workshop.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: This change would allow for more registered apprenticeships. There are many students working part time in manufacturing, but also attending college classes for an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree, who may be unable to recognized as a registered apprentice because of this outdated requirement.

Sponsor(s): Kathryn Starkey, Commissioner, Pasco County, Fla.

Proposed Resolution Supporting Reauthorization and Appropriations for the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration

Issue: Appropriations and reauthorization legislation for the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA)

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to support reauthorization and current appropriations for the U.S. Department of Commerce's EDA to keep communities strong and economically viable at this critical time in the history of our nation.

Background: The EDA provides direct resources to counties to support economic development efforts through planning grants to regional economic development districts, in order to support comprehensive economic development strategy planning and implementation, as well as financing for public works and technical assistance projects. It focuses solely on private sector job creation and retention.

EDA has developed an impressive track record of making strategic investments and building partnerships that help regions and communities respond to shifts in international markets, address severe unemployment challenges and recover from plant closures, major natural disasters, and other chronic, sudden and severe economic hardships.

NACo supports at least maintaining EDA's FY 2018 funding level of $301.5 million for FY 2019.

At a time when the nation must make the regional and local investments necessary to compete in the modern global economy, the flexibility, partnership structure and accountability of EDA programs should be at the forefront of the federal strategic plan. EDA's portfolio of economic development infrastructure, business development finance, regional innovation strategies and public-private partnerships are tailored to support the unique needs of each region.

EDA grants are awarded on a competitive basis to local governments, nonprofits and 45 communities by the agency's six regional offices. By federal law, EDA projects typically require a local cost share and significant private sector investment, ensuring that local leaders and businesses are committed to project success. EDA investments focus on high quality jobs, especially in advanced manufacturing, science and technology and emerging knowledge-based industries and sectors.

EDA and its local partners direct their attention to the fundamental building blocks for economic development. EDA's infrastructure projects target essential facilities and assets, such as water and wastewater systems, middle mile broadband networks, workforce training centers, business incubators, intermodal facilities and science and research parks. These assets often are lacking in the nation's most distressed areas, yet they are a prerequisite for private industry to remain or locate in these areas.

The keys to EDA's repeated successes remain its flexible program tools, its long-standing partnerships with regional and local economic development organizations, and its focus on investing in locally and regionally-driven strategies and infrastructure projects that are tied to leveraging private sector job creation and retention activities.

Fiscal Urban/Rural Impact: EDA's programs provide critical funding for economic and community development initiatives and key projects important for creating and retaining jobs.

Sponsor(s): Renee Price, Commissioner, Orange County, N.C.