



NACo's Board backs Regional Innovation Initiative & climate change actions

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Washington, March 9 – At this week's National Association of Counties (NACo) 2010 Legislative Conference, NACo's Board of Directors approved a string of resolutions including support for USDA's Rural Innovation Initiative. The Board concludes that the USDA initiative "is designed to provide a new framework for promoting economic development and job creation in rural communities. . . The proposed initiative supports growth and job creation in rural counties."

Other resolutions, with some listed below, covered issues ranging from healthcare and transportation to public lands, jobs programs and carbon sequestration.

The Rural Innovation Initiative resolution from NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee states that:

- "The President's Budget for FY 2011 supports the creation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Innovation Initiative. The newly proposed initiative is designed to provide a new framework for promoting economic development and job creation in rural communities. To support this innovative locally-driven approach, USDA requested a set aside of more than \$280 million, roughly 5 percent of the funding from approximately 20 existing programs, and will allocate these funds competitively among innovative regional economic development projects tailored to local needs and opportunities. The Administration requested \$1.4 million for USDA Rural Development to staff the new initiative. USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service and Forest Service will also be involved in implementation."
- "The 20 programs that are part of the initiative will reserve 5 percent of their funding for projects that are engaged in strategic regional development planning. While it does not provide new funding for these key county supported programs, the initiative does seek to reorient USDA towards a model of development that respects local priorities and plans, fosters regional cooperation and brings more cohesion and simplicity to many of USDA's programs that are designed to revitalize rural communities. The 20 programs included in the initiative are:

Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans; Rural Development Loan Fund; Rural Business Enterprise Grants; Rural Business Opportunity Grants; Rural Economic Development Grants; Rural Microenterprise Program; Biorefinery Assistance Program; Rural Energy for America Program; Value Added Producer Grants; Broadband Program; Water and Waste Program; Rural Community Facilities Program; Farmers Market Promotion Program; Wholesale Farmers and Alternative Market Development Program; Environmental Quality Incentives Program; Urban and Community Forestry; Road Capital Improvement and Maintenance; and Wildland Fire Management Hazardous Fuels Initiative.”

- “The Administration’s proposal to create a new Rural Innovation Initiative is an extremely promising development for rural counties. NACo has led the effort to call upon Congress and the Administration to renew and reorient rural development efforts and the Regional Innovation Initiative represents an important step toward that goal.”

Among the Board’s 38 other resolutions:

“Resolution on Climate Legislative Initiatives: NACo supports active county participation in climate legislative initiatives. These initiatives must be balanced and equitable, that benefit counties by providing revenue to communities for creating economic growth, sustainable businesses, community development, energy efficiency, conserving parks and open spaces and develop natural resources that increase quality jobs, business productivity and competitiveness.”

“Resolution Supporting Estate Tax Relief: NACo urges Congress to pass legislation providing additional relief and permanency in the estate tax code for America’s farmers, ranchers, and other small business owners.”

“Resolution on Immigration Reform: The National Association of Counties urges Congress and the President to enact comprehensive immigration reform this year that:

- Provides for uniform enforcement of all existing laws;
- Secures our borders;
- Includes a national strategy for coordination among federal, state, local and tribal authorities;
- Establishes a sensible and orderly guest worker program for legal immigrants;
- Imposes no unfunded mandates on state and local governments;
- Includes no mandates on counties to enforce immigration laws; and
- Provides a sustainable funding stream to counties for immigrant health care funded by fees levied on legalized immigrants.”

“Resolution Federal Forest Carbon Sequestration Revenues: If Congress enacts climate change or cap and trade legislation, legislation should include carbon sequestration on federal forest lands as a new source of revenue through revenue sharing to counties.”

“Resolution to Promote Healthy Forest Ecosystems and Reduce the Release of Green House Gases through Active Management of the: NACo urges Congress to enact legislation to direct and enable federal forest management agencies to reduce Fire

Regime Condition Class 3 (FRCC 3) to the standard of FRCC 1 in all federal forests by the year 2030, and to reduce FRCC 2 to the standard of FRCC 1 in all federal forests by the year 2050, through the means of active landscape scale management, fuels reduction, and immediate post-fire restoration.”

“Resolution on the Federal Definition of Renewable Biomass: NACo supports the definition of biomass from Titles I & III of the 2008 Farm Act (Farm Bill), which states that renewable biomass is:

- For Federal Lands: Materials that are byproducts of preventive treatments (e.g., trees, wood) that are removed to reduce hazardous fuels, to reduce or contain disease or insect infestation, or to restore ecosystem health; would not otherwise be used for higher value products; and are harvested from National Forest System land or public lands in accordance with public laws, land management plans, and requirements for old-growth maintenance.
- For Non-Federal Lands: Any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis from non-Federal land or land belonging to Indian tribes, including renewable plant materials (feed grains, other agricultural commodities, other plants and trees, algae), waste material (crop residue, other vegetative waste material including wood waste and wood residue), animal waste and byproducts (fats, oils, greases, and manure), construction waste, and food waste/yard waste.”

“Resolution on Grazing and Rangeland Health: NACo urges Congress and the Administration to develop alternative grazing allotment management procedures or strategies that would satisfy existing NEPA obligations (or streamline NEPA), provide land management agencies with management flexibility (options), shorten the decision-making time, and reduce the cost to the taxpayer associated with rangeland management decisions.”

“Resolution on Distribution of Federal Royalty Payments for Renewable Energy Projects on Public Lands: NACo supports the sharing of federal leasing and rights of way revenues from renewable energy development (wind, solar, and geothermal) on federal lands with state and county governments where that development occurs.”

To read NACo’s 43-page 2010 Interim Policy Resolutions document, go to:

www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Advocacy&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=33260

For coverage of issues discussed at NACo’s 2010 Legislative Conference, go to:

www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20100309H1.pdf.

For coverage of USDA’s new Rural Innovation Initiative, go to:

www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/Mar0310H3.pdf &

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#30