

Proposed Resolution Requesting the Department of Energy (DOE) to Develop an Infrastructure Program for Host and Neighboring Communities

Issue: The operation of Department of Energy (DOE) facilities creates housing, transportation and related infrastructure and workforce stressors on counties throughout the country which affect the ability of the DOE to meet its mission and which have no existing funding resources.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) requests the Department of Energy (DOE) to develop an infrastructure investment program. The investments would be made through a grant program or direct funding from the DOE that would provide funding to alleviate the stressors affecting counties and other local government infrastructure that surround DOE facilities. Eligible activities under the program would include transportation, housing, education, emergency response, water, telecommunication and utility projects that benefit the operations and workforce of the DOE facility and the surrounding local government.

Background: The Department of Energy (DOE) has facilities in at least 39 states, with 17 laboratories in 14 states, affecting hundreds of counties across the United States. The operations include a wide variety of activities. For most communities that host these facilities, the additional workforce and taxes can be a boon. However, for the host community and surrounding communities, there is often additional stress on infrastructure and workforce. A program for DOE communities would alleviate the additional requirements from the high level of traffic, housing, personnel and other needs of these facilities, thereby furthering national goals.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: For a host community and all neighboring communities, but particularly for rural areas that have few if any other major industry, a DOE Infrastructure Program would have tremendous impact on their ability to provide housing through additional infrastructure, ensure safety and manage the amount of service and maintenance needed as a result of their proximity to DOE facilities.

Sponsor(s): Randall Ryti, Council Chair, Los Alamos County, N.M.

Proposed Resolution Urging Congress to Refrain from Preempting Counties Ability to Recover Damages from Costly and Destructive Weather Events

Issue: Counties are vulnerable to an increasing number of extreme weather events that strain taxpayer resources and the ability of Counties to respond and recover. Similar to how Counties recovered damages associated with opioids and tobacco, access to the courts is an essential tool for County governments to recover the costs of extreme weather events.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) opposes Congressional legislation that would grant immunity from litigation or limit or preempt Counties' access to courts to recover damages and costs of extreme weather events.

Background: Access to the courts is an essential tool for county governments to recover the costs of extreme weather events as resources are stretched thin due to reduced federal funding, issues with insurance costs and availability and growing difficulty with funding infrastructure projects.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: The loss of access to the courts would remove an essential financial tool for Counties to recover the growing cost burden to taxpayers of destructive weather, much like counties benefited from tobacco and opioid legal settlements.

Sponsor(s): Brigid Shea, Commissioner, Travis County, Texas; Rob Zapple, Commissioner, New Hanover County, N.C.; Thomas Barnes, Commissioner, Colbert County, Ala.; Randall Ryti, Council Chair, Los Alamos County, N.M.

Proposed Resolution Supporting of Promoting Nuclear Energy Innovation

Issue: Nuclear energy plays an essential role in securing our country's clean energy future, because the generation of electricity from nuclear plants emits no carbon dioxide or air pollution and is the country's largest source of clean energy yet is being underutilized.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges federal government agencies to promote nuclear energy innovation for existing and new nuclear deployment, including the development of nuclear microgrids, research on fusion technology and research on adopting reprocessing methods throughout the U.S. nuclear industry.

Background: Nuclear energy is seeing a renaissance across the globe, including in individual counties across the United States. Ensuring we have the best technology going forward is essential to our long-term energy health.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Nuclear energy could be both a revenue source for counties as well as a way to lower costs for energy for citizens.

Sponsor(s): Randall Ryti, Council Chair, Los Alamos County, N.M.; Danielle Duran, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, Los Alamos County, N.M.

Proposed Resolution Supporting Federal Water Infrastructure Resilience and Financing

Issue: Counties across the United States face growing water infrastructure needs driven by aging systems, population growth, drought, flooding, wildfire impacts, emerging contaminants, watershed protection requirements and increasing resilience challenges. Additional federal investment, financing tools, and technical assistance are needed to help counties maintain, modernize, and expand critical drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, water reuse and watershed infrastructure.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress and federal agencies to expand and strengthen federal financing, grant, and technical assistance programs that support county and local water infrastructure investments.

NACo supports increased federal investment in drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, water reuse, watershed protection, aquifer recharge, drought resilience, flood mitigation and emerging contaminant treatment projects. NACo further supports expanding access to affordable financing tools, increasing assistance for small and rural communities, streamlining federal program requirements and improving coordination among federal water infrastructure funding programs.

NACo urges Congress and federal agencies to prioritize investments that enhance public health, environmental protection, water security, economic development and community resilience while ensuring that counties and county-affiliated utilities remain eligible applicants and beneficiaries of federal water infrastructure assistance programs.

Background: Counties own, operate, regulate, or support critical water infrastructure systems that provide safe drinking water, wastewater treatment, stormwater management, flood protection, and environmental stewardship services for residents and businesses. Across the nation, counties face increasing infrastructure investment needs as aging systems require replacement or modernization, and communities address growing demands associated with population growth, climate resilience, public health protection, and regulatory compliance.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that hundreds of billions of dollars in additional investment will be required over the coming decades to maintain and improve the nation's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure systems. At the same time, counties face increasing challenges associated with drought, wildfire impacts, flooding, watershed degradation, emerging contaminants such as PFAS, cybersecurity requirements, and growing demands for reliable and resilient water supplies. Federal financing and assistance programs have long played an important role in helping counties address these challenges. Programs such as the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development programs, Bureau of Reclamation water infrastructure initiatives, and other federal funding mechanisms provide critical support for local infrastructure investment. These programs help reduce borrowing costs, leverage local resources, and accelerate project delivery while minimizing impacts on local taxpayers and utility ratepayers.

Despite the availability of federal assistance, many counties continue to face barriers to participation due to limited funding availability, administrative complexity, technical capacity constraints, matching fund requirements, and growing competition for available resources. Smaller and rural communities often face particular challenges accessing affordable financing despite significant infrastructure needs.

Counties that host major federal facilities, including Department of Energy installations, military bases, national laboratories, and other federal operations, may face additional infrastructure demands associated with supporting those federal missions. Strengthening federal investment in water infrastructure resilience and financing will help counties address these challenges while advancing national public health, environmental protection, economic development, and resilience objectives.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Expanded federal investment in water infrastructure resilience and financing would provide significant benefits to counties of all sizes by reducing project costs, leveraging local investment, improving water system reliability, enhancing community resilience, and supporting long-term economic development. These benefits are particularly important for small, rural, underserved, and infrastructure-constrained communities that often face the greatest challenges financing critical water infrastructure projects. Increased federal support can reduce long-term costs to taxpayers and ratepayers while protecting public health and environmental quality.

Sponsor(s): Randall Ryti, Council Chair, Los Alamos County, N.M.

Proposed Resolution Supporting Increased Federal Investment in Wildfire Mitigation, Forest Health, and Watershed Resilience

Issue: Western counties face increasing threats from catastrophic wildfires driven by prolonged drought, hazardous fuel accumulation, forest health challenges, extreme weather conditions and expanding development within the wildland-urban interface. Counties require additional federal investment in wildfire mitigation, forest restoration, watershed protection and community resilience to reduce risks to lives, property, critical infrastructure, water supplies and local economies.

Proposed Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress and the Administration to substantially increase federal investment in wildfire mitigation, forest health and watershed resilience programs. NACo supports increased funding for hazardous fuels reduction, mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, forest restoration and landscape-scale resilience projects on federal lands.

NACo further urges Congress and federal agencies to expand support for Community Wildfire Defense Grants, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Firewise programs and other locally driven wildfire preparedness initiatives. NACo supports increased funding for county emergency preparedness, evacuation planning, emergency communications, infrastructure hardening and community resilience efforts.

Additionally, NACo urges federal agencies to prioritize collaborative forest management efforts involving counties, Tribal governments, states, local communities and other stakeholders and to accelerate treatment projects in areas where federal lands are adjacent to communities, municipal watersheds, transportation corridors, critical infrastructure and national security facilities.

Background: Counties throughout the western United States are experiencing increasingly severe wildfire seasons that threaten public safety, economic stability, environmental resources, and community resilience. Catastrophic wildfires have become more frequent and destructive as prolonged drought, insect and disease infestations, hazardous fuel accumulation, and changing climatic conditions place increasing stress on western forests and watersheds.

Many western counties contain substantial federal land holdings managed by agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Department of Defense, and Department of Energy. While these lands provide significant environmental, recreational, and economic benefits, decades of fuel accumulation and insufficient forest management have increased the likelihood of large, high-severity wildfires that threaten nearby communities and critical infrastructure. Counties bear significant costs associated with wildfire preparedness, emergency response, evacuation planning, infrastructure protection, post-fire flooding, watershed rehabilitation, debris-flow mitigation, economic recovery, and long-term resilience planning. In many communities, wildfire impacts continue for years after the fire through degraded water quality, damaged watersheds, increased flooding, reduced tourism activity, and costly infrastructure repairs.

Particular concern exists for counties that host critical national security, scientific, energy, and defense facilities located within or adjacent to fire-prone landscapes. Wildfire impacts affecting these facilities may have consequences extending beyond local communities and can affect national security, scientific research, energy reliability, and federal operations.

Federal wildfire suppression expenditures continue to grow, yet investments in prevention, mitigation, forest restoration, and watershed protection remain insufficient to address the scale of risk facing western communities. Strategic investments in forest health and community resilience can reduce future suppression costs while protecting public safety, water resources, local economies, and environmental values.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Increased federal investment in wildfire mitigation, forest restoration, and watershed resilience would provide significant fiscal benefits to counties by reducing emergency response costs, protecting critical infrastructure, safeguarding water supplies, and minimizing long-term recovery expenses. The resolution benefits counties of all sizes but is particularly important for western, rural, forested, public-lands, and wildfire-prone communities that face disproportionate wildfire risks and limited local financial capacity to address those risks independently.

Sponsor(s): Randall Ryti, Council Chair, Los Alamos County, N.M.