



NARC

Building Regional Communities

National Association of Regional Councils

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February 25, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), representing regional planning organizations and their local elected officials, offers assistance through streamlining regulations and providing local examples on the benefits of federal funding as you debate the Continuing Resolution (H.R. 1) and the fiscal year 2012 budget and spending bills. We understand that difficult economic times require a re-examination of federal program success and effectiveness, but we encourage you to continue to fund vital local and regional programs that provide economic opportunity, create jobs and make our communities safe.

NARC offers the following general recommendations for consideration as you examine federal funding:

- Reforms to and consolidation of federal funding and programs should be looked to in order to save money and increase government efficiency, while decreasing the national debt.
- Domestic, discretionary programs, which are only 12 percent of the federal annual budget, are critical to the ability of local governments and regions to carry out their responsibilities as service providers for both the federal and state governments.
- Due to economic challenges, local governments have experienced reduced revenue streams due to decreased taxes (primarily property and sales) and major reductions in state financial assistance, while at the same time facing an increased demand for services. As a result, local governments of all sizes and in all parts of the nation have been forced to institute significant layoffs, furloughs and service reductions, which could continue for several years to come.
- Federal assistance to state and local governments and regions will help mitigate further layoffs. Current unemployment rates are already at 9.4 percent nationally.
- Federal investment in state, local and regional infrastructure produces jobs and promotes local economic opportunities.
- Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to states and local governments, imposing unfunded mandates, or pre-empting local government programs or taxing authority.

We urge you to recognize and utilize the success of local governments working regionally through regional Councils of Government (COGs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) to save money, increase efficiencies and provide streamlined processes.

As your deliberations move forward, we hope to partner with you to develop strong federal policies and strategic plans that increase the effectiveness of federal dollars and showcase local and regional accomplishments. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information at 202.986.1032, x216 or fred@narc.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Fred Aoulosleman
Executive Director

*Cc: Chairman Daniel Inouye, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Thad Cochran, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee*