

2015 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

Protect Local Revenue and Land Use Authority

Local government land use and revenue authority is critical to the federal-state-local partnership effort to advance community and economic development and must be preserved. As such, the League urges Congress to:

- Support the Marketplace Fairness Act;
- Oppose a permanent extension to the Internet Tax Freedom Act;
- Oppose efforts by online travel companies to circumvent remittance of transient occupancy taxes (TOT) from hotel reservations purchased using the internet.

Support Community and Economic Development

The League urges Congress to preserve maximum funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and seek flexibility in the CDBG state program to enhance the use of the program by California's 314 non-entitlement cities (cities under 50,000).

The League also supports maintaining the tax exempt status of municipal bonds and opposes proposals to cap the investor tax deduction on municipal securities investments.

Adopt a Long-Term Transportation Bill & Make the Highway Trust Fund Solvent

The previously enacted transportation reauthorization bill, MAP-21, expires next year. It is critical that Congress enact a six-year bill that allows municipalities to plan for long term investments in surface transportation and targets funding for municipalities and local transportation agencies. The new authorization bill should focus on maintenance and preservation, and provide funding for roads, bridges, freight, and transit.

Better Rail Safety

The continued increase in the transport of crude oil by rail, combined with recent rail accidents involving oil spills and resulting fires, has served to heighten concerns about rail safety among many of our member cities. Rail safety improvements such as electronically controlled brake controls and the provision of real-time information to first responders must be expedited. In addition, rail tank cars that no longer meet safety standards must be phased out as soon as possible.

Balanced Approach to Budgeting and Appropriations

The League urges Congress to adopt a bipartisan and balanced approach to appropriations that also minimizes spending cuts. California cities have already faced deep reductions in spending, forcing cuts to a number of critical local services and dramatic job losses for first responders. Additional cuts will imperil the services that city residents desperately need.

Enact Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Like the National League of Cities and many others across our nation, the League of California Cities believes comprehensive immigration reform should be an urgent priority of Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform. Every day cities are affected by the current dysfunction in our immigration system, and the need for action is critical.

Support Investments in Affordable Housing

California's cities are deeply concerned with the need for affordable housing. The League urges Congress to support legislation and proposals that provide incentives and resources to assist in the reorganization and replacement of existing infrastructure to support California's growing population. In addition, the League supports proposals such as the HOME Program that provide a variety of financial restructuring options, such as loan forgiveness, payment deferrals, grants, loans and loan guarantees to provide and preserve rental housing for long-term affordable use.

Invest in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

California cities' water and wastewater systems need a significant overhaul to keep the world's eighth largest economy moving. The League urges Congress to provide adequate and reliable long-term financing solutions for municipal water delivery, maintenance and treatment needs to meet federally mandated water quality standards, and maintain the vital infrastructure necessary to ensure the availability of clean water for an increasing population.

The League also encourages the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency to expeditiously implement the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Authority (WIFIA) program as authorized by the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in 2014.

Invest in Public Safety and Disaster Preparedness

To strengthen California's homeland security, emergency preparedness and crime-fighting efforts, the League urges Congress to maintain federal investment in resources critical to enabling local law enforcement to adequately provide public safety. Specifically, the League supports full funding for the Byrne/Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) program, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER), the Assistance to Firefighters grant programs and for disaster preparedness, prevention, recovery, and response for all-hazard threats.

Develop Energy Efficient and Resource Conservation Strategies

The League urges Congress to allot federal resources to assist regional and local governments in developing and implementing energy efficiency and conservation strategies and ensure that local governments can continue, and not be preempted in, their efforts to achieve economic improvements through increased energy efficiency and conservation plans that seek to decrease carbon emissions.