

National Association of Counties (NACo) COVID-19 Conference Call Summary – March 17, 2020

- NACo President Remarks:
 - NACo is rapidly disseminating factual and timely information to the public
 - Counties encouraged to reach out to NACo as a resource especially considering their relationship with the federal government

- Matt Chase (NACo Executive Director) Remarks:
 - 156 counties have declared either broad emergency declaration or public health declaration
 - NACo asks that counties submit their county declarations and submit questions to research@naco.org
 - Welcome feedback on federal policy priorities
 - Will cover three categories:
 - Federal Aid Packages
 - Tips for Federal Aid – document your expenses
 - County Lessons – joined by the state directors from the Washington State Association of Counties and the New York Association of Counties

 - Federal Aid Packages:
 - First Package - Congress has passed and sent to the President; include \$8.5 billion for coronavirus supplement – for counties it includes \$950 million for state and local public health through Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program that flows mostly through states (only flows through 6 counties directly); counties should work with their state public health agency to get the dollars and to learn eligible uses and required paperwork; \$100 million for community health centers; remaining dollars are for COVID-19 testing and research; this is package is moving forward

- HR 6201 (second package) – be sure to read the amended technical version that passed the House on a second amended vote that includes technical corrections; the Senate will move forward with the second package; this package includes for counties language for free testing, \$1 billion for nutrition assistance, \$1 billion for Medicaid, 6.2 percent increase for federal Medicaid match; provisions around paid sick and medical leave; the bill does not provide tax credits to public sector; much uncertainty around unemployment insurance – will public sector employees be eligible? NACo has sent a survey to all state associations to collect this information

Tips for Federal Aid:

- Most of the aid in the two federal packages flows from feds to state agencies.
- FEMA Disaster Relief Fund Public Assistance Program - \$42.6 billion available to reimburse counties. HHS and FEMA are working on what is eligible under the Stafford Act. Counties will have to go through the state
- Document, document, document your expenses

- Increase in cybersecurity attacks – the HHS Twitter account was hacked. Be sure to train workforce to be on watch for fake emails and cyberattacks
- County Lessons Learned and Resources - NACo
 - NACo has a COVID-19 webpage – less is more, focusing on resharing from experts
 - The NACo page logs county declarations – includes link to declarations to give counties boilerplate language. Summaries of first and second congressional packages; NACo just sent a letter to request information on the federal aid third package
 - Highlighting the importance of county behavioral health programs
 - Stressing importance of DOL restrictions on pensions so counties can use retirees to come back to work during times of emergencies such as this
 - Please do not close records offices – make sure counties continue to provide access to local broadcasters
 - Look at cashflow and liquidity of investments – how are the investments structured – i.e. unfunded pension liabilities
- Important Lessons Learned – New York State and Washington State County Associations
 - New York State Association of Counties
 - Nearly all counties in NY state have declared a state of emergency
 - County departments are looking to close and switch to appointment times only (e.g. DMV)
 - 1,000 cases confirmed in NY City alone this week
 - Long distance e-learning and broadband are critical
 - All bars, gyms, restaurants are closed
 - Local curfews are being discussed but the state wants to decide all curfews and locals will have to abide
 - Colleges are being considered as childcare centers for emergency workers
 - 20% of those who tested positive for COVID-19 will require hospitalization – consider the implications to the health care system (available beds, personnel, equipment, etc.)
 - 911 call centers are overwhelmed
 - Drive through testing implemented in a few counties
 - The key is containment – handwashing, social distancing
 - Ended visitations at nursing homes and local jails
 - No mass gatherings
 - Providing masks to first responders
 - Let your local health department take the lead
 - Always be truthful with the public – it helps keep people calm
 - Need more testing and FEMA assistance to build out healthcare ICU beds
 - All elective surgeries are canceled
 - NYC has 11 medical tents from federal government
 - Washington State Association of Counties
 - Communication is important – especially from county to county

- Frequent and ongoing communication
 - What they could have done better – make sure communication occurred in counties in all facets of government operations – share the wealth of information. Opportunity for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing in counties across the state
 - Think about how you will address closures
 - Think about how you will conduct a lot of your business services electronically
 - Send county employees home to telework or place them on administrative leave
 - Make sure there is consistent messaging in communication from state and local emergency operation centers – make sure it's a public health message
 - 904, 48 deaths in Washington state
 - Be aware of what's coming
 - Asking federal government to suspend new regulations and rule requirements at the federal levels to allow counties to focus on COVID-19 response
 - Think long-term, not just about recovery, but about preparedness and mitigation should we see this again
- Closing Comments from Matt Chase (NACo Executive Director)
 - Work with HR to make sure you are checking in on employees
 - White House call tomorrow at 1 p.m. for state and local officials
 - Form 90-49 for FEMA public assistance
 - NACo will provide a conference call summary that includes main bullet points

[NACo COVID-19 Website](#)