

# SUPPORT COUNTY PRIORITIES AS CONGRESS BEGINS WORK ON NEXT FARM BILL

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### ACTION NEEDED:

This year, Congress began laying the foundation for the reauthorization of a new Farm Bill. Current legislation, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), expires at the end of FY 2023. NACo continues to work to preserve county priorities.

Urge your members of Congress to support county priorities throughout the development of the 2023 Farm Bill. Programs throughout the Farm Bill help counties make critical investments in infrastructure, economic development, nutrition and conservation. Preserving these programs is vital to the strength of our local and national economy.

### BACKGROUND:

Congress has begun negotiations in earnest for development of the 2023 Farm Bill. Current legislation, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) expires at the end of FY 2023. All titles of the Farm Bill are important to the vitality of our nation and should underscore the growing interdependence of rural and urban communities, and the common stake each has in ensuring that the remarkable assets of rural America are fully optimized.

The farm bill helps counties make critical investments in infrastructure, workforce and economic development, and nutrition and conservation for some of our nation's most underserved communities. Preserving these programs is key to the strength and stability of our local and national economy.

Counties support full funding for all Farm Bill titles, which help strengthen rural infrastructure including broadband and water and wastewater systems, support rural development initiatives coordinated with local officials protect our nation's food supply, increase access to healthy food for low-income populations through

THE FARM BILL CONTAINS PROGRAMS THAT ASSIST COUNTIES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS, NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, CONSERVATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT, SUPPORT FOR NEW FARMERS AND RANCHERS, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES.

COUNTIES SUPPORT FULL FUNDING OF ALL TITLES OF THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION.

PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE FARM BILL HELP COUNTIES MAKE CRITICAL INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NUTRITION AND CONSERVATION. PRESERVING THESE PROGRAMS IS VITAL TO THE STRENGTH OF OUR LOCAL AND NATIONAL ECONOMY.

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the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), and promote environmental stewardship and conservation.

The Farm Bill contains 12 titles in key areas including Commodity Programs for our nation's producers, Conservation and Forestry provisions, Nutrition, Credit, and Rural Development. Within the 2018 Farm Bill, NACo advocated for and secured inclusion of the permanent reinstatement of the Undersecretary of Rural Development for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) who oversees the over \$200 billion USDA Rural Development portfolio.

Programs of interest within the Rural Development Title, include:

- **\$150 million for the Water and Wastewater Programs:** Rural Water and Wastewater Programs help counties fund and finance critical water infrastructure and provide access to affordable and clean water to rural communities.
- **\$82 million for the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program:** This program helps rural communities use the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect to each other and to the world, overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. Eligible applicants include most entities that provide education or health care through telecommunications, including counties and federally-recognized tribes.
- **\$20 million for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program:** The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program provides loans, grants and technical assistance to microloan borrowers and micro entrepreneurs in rural counties.
- **\$50 million for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program:** The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides grants to organizations for education, mentoring, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers.

The 2018 Farm Bill also created the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program championed by NACo in the Rural Development title which would help counties strengthen the local economy through partnerships with the private sector and institutions of higher education.

SNAP was reauthorized and maintained existing eligibility and work requirements for SNAP while expanding job training and other SNAP Employment and Training programs originally authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The 2018 Farm Bill also provided \$350 million in funding for rural broadband infrastructure and expanded uses for USDA broadband loans and grants to middle-mile projects.

## KEY TALKING POINTS:

- All titles of the Farm Bill are important to the vitality of our nation, therefore, counties support full funding of all titles of this important legislation.
- The Rural Development title supports rural business and community development and addresses a wide range of policy issues concerning rural America, including equity capital development in rural areas, regional economic planning and development, essential community facilities, water and



wastewater infrastructure needs, value-added agricultural development and broadband telecommunications development

- Urge your members of Congress to support county priorities throughout the development of the 2023 farm bill. Programs throughout the farm bill help counties make critical investments in infrastructure, economic development, nutrition and conservation. Preserving these programs is vital to the strength of our local and national economy.

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**For further information, contact Aaliyah Nedd at 202.661.8833 or [anedd@naco.org](mailto:anedd@naco.org).**

