


CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065 / TELEPHONE 547-7000

ROMY M. CACHOLA
COUNCILMEMBER
(808) 768-5007
(808) 768-5011 (fax)
e-mail: rcachola@honolulu.gov

April 5, 2011

Memorandum

TO: Clayton Wong, City Council Administrative Office

FROM: Councilmember Romy M. Cachola 

SUBJECT: National Association of Counties (NACo)
2011 Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C.
March 5-9, 2011

I attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) 2011 Legislative Conference, which was held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. from March 5-9, 2011. The conference was an opportunity for over 1,500 elected and appointed county officials from around the country to network and exchange information on a variety of issues.

Jobs and the role of county governments in the economic recovery was the primary focus of the five-day conference. County officials also discussed NACo's 2011 Key Legislative Priorities, considered policy resolutions on federal issues affecting local government, met with Obama administration officials and members of Congress, and heard from prominent national leaders and commentators.

NACo's steering committees met and reviewed recommendations on issues and legislation important to counties and communities. Various issues that the committees covered include justice and public safety, agriculture and rural affairs, taxes, environment and energy, telecommunications, economic and community development, health care, human services, education, labor and employment, public lands and transportation. Copies of resolutions were distributed to steering committee members for their review and consideration. The policy development process initiated by these steering committees leads to the publication of the American County Platform, which NACo uses as a guide to deliver county governments' message to the administration, Congress and the American public.

As a member of the Honolulu City Council's transportation committee, I focused primarily on transportation-related issues. The policy development process initiated by the steering committees leads to the publication of the American County Platform, which NACo uses as a guide to deliver the county government message to the administration, Congress and the American public.

Saturday, March 5, 2011

On day one of the conference, I attended several meetings held by NACo's Transportation Steering Committee meeting, of which I am a member. From 12 noon to 1 pm, I attended the Highway-Highway Safety Subcommittee meeting, which was followed by the Transit-Railroad Subcommittee meeting from 1 pm to 2 pm, then the Ports Subcommittee meeting from 2 pm to 3 pm. Lastly, I attended the Airports Subcommittee meeting from 3 pm to 4 pm.

The subcommittees provide an opportunity to discuss issues in an informal setting. New NACo policy is often first considered at these meetings.

Sunday, March 6, 2011

From 9 am to 12 noon, I attended the full NACo Transportation Steering Committee meeting. During the meeting, Jim Tymon, staff director for the House Highways and Transit Subcommittee, said a focus on results and projects in the "federal interest" are among the priorities driving the lawmakers crafting the next surface transportation bill. Tymon said that it's a formula for doing less and that some of the 100 or so existing surface transportation programs will need to be simplified, consolidated or eliminated if they aren't national priorities.

Tymon's boss, Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.), who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, wants to contain project costs and stretch available dollars by setting hard deadlines for resource agencies, such as the EPA and Corps of Engineers, to sign off on permits. Lengthy project reviews can drive up construction costs. Tymon says that if permits are not signed off on within 30, 60 or 90 days, then the resource agencies are deemed to have approved them.

The Transportation Steering Committee supports job creation by enacting aviation and surface transportation program reauthorizations. Reauthorization of the federal airport and aviation programs needs to be completed. NACo also supports a well-funded Airport Improvement Program with guaranteed funding from the aviation trust funds and increased funding for the Essential Air Service and the Small Communities Air Service Programs. Congress should develop a comprehensive legislative effort to create jobs by providing robust funding for bridges, highways, mass transit, assistance for rural roads and other local infrastructure needs by reauthorizing the highway, transit, and safety programs.

The Transportation Steering Committee also urges Congress to explore various financing sources available to fully fund the Highway Trust Fund into the future while addressing

metropolitan congestion and rural road safety. Enactment of these programs will help build our nation's infrastructure and create additional employment opportunities.

Monday, March 7, 2011

From 9 am to 10:15 am, I attended a workshop during Educational Session Block I entitled "A New World in Transportation." This workshop discussed changes that may affect counties as a result of changes in policy and politics surrounding the reauthorization of the highway transit, federal airport and aviation programs. The panelists included Kathy Dedrick, a professional staff member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee; Holly Woodruff Lyons, staff director of the House Subcommittee on Aviation; and Polly Trottenburg, assistant secretary for policy, U.S. Dept. of Transportation. The panelists shared their insight on what counties can expect in 2011, how to prepare for the impact of these changes and how to lobby members of Congress for the changes that counties may need.

From 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm, I attended the Opening General Session. Included in the list of guest speakers was Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Eric J. Holder, U.S. Attorney General; and Joe Scarborough, former U.S. congressman from Florida.

Adm. Mullen stated that can help to extend the reach of federal efforts to assist military veterans and their families. In doing so, counties also stand to benefit. He said that returning veterans are "wired for service" and want to use those same instincts in their communities. Creating opportunities for these young men and women will ensure that they continue to serve for decades to come. As a whole, Adm. Mullen said that we Americans have a duty to help our veterans, some of whom face challenges such as homelessness, mental illness and reintegrating into their communities. Suicide rates are also on the rise among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs can't do it alone, nor should the effort be Washington, D.C.-based only. Adm. Mullen praised NACo's efforts, through President Glen Whitley's veteran-focused presidential initiative, to honor and assist veterans. He said that these efforts have made a difference in the lives of these young men and women and their families.

As for Attorney General Holder, the highlight of his speech from NACo's perspective was when he praised NACo for its policy on indigent defense. He challenged counties to be more creative in times of fiscal distress and staffing woes, but addressed his two main goals for justice reform: increasing the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system and improving access to legal services. Attorney General Holder said the current juvenile justice system does not spend resources wisely and bemoaned the disparate population of incarcerated African American youths relative to the overall population, the likelihood of children who have been abused ending up in prison and the percentage of inmates who have suffered sexual abuse in prison.

As for Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman from Northwestern Florida, he told county officials that the federal budget was balanced four years in a row while he was in Congress and that it can be balanced again with proper leadership on Capitol Hill. Scarborough advised county officials to tell their congressional delegation that the national

deficit cannot be balanced on the backs of counties, cities and states. Congress can't focus only on reducing domestic and discretionary spending programs that will affect the taxpaying public. He castigated the current Congress for not having the courage to face up to the real budget issues, and said his party's presidential candidates are not facing up either. In closing, Scarborough told how former House Speaker Tip O'Neill, described as a "Liberal's Liberal" and former President Ronald Reagan—a "Conservative's Conservative" would often beat each other up in the press during the day, but at night they would gather at the White House and work together on solutions for the American people.

Conclusion

Due to family obligations, I left the conference early. However, I understand that on the final day of the conference, county officials met with their respective Congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. Counties continue to be deeply concerned that federal deficit reduction talks in Washington have focused too much on reductions to domestic, discretionary spending programs that will affect the American people. Examples include NACo legislative priorities such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. NACo President Glen Whitley, a county judge from Tarrant County in Texas, summed it up best when he said: *"When the economy falters and there is high unemployment, services at the county level are needed most. After years of declining revenue, counties are struggling to fund essential social safety net, health care and public safety services, as well as maintain their aging transportation and infrastructure systems."*

In fact, many of the conference's speakers publically concurred with Judge Whitley's recent letter to President Obama and NACo Resolution on the federal deficit. Key points made by several speakers were that Congress and the President cannot solve budget deficit by only cutting domestic, non-military discretionary spending that makes up 12 percent of the annual federal budget "on the backs of the American people and local governments." One speaker said that in the 1970s non-military, discretionary spending was 55 percent of the annual federal budget. Other speakers acknowledged that the war in Iraq and Afghanistan is costing over \$2 billion per week and is using borrowed money to be financed. They said that it was impossible to balance a budget if "entitlements are off the table, revenues are off the table, and defense is off the table." The repeated theme from both Republican and Democrat speakers was that not investing in education, infrastructure, innovative research and development is foolish.

Overall, NACo's 2011 Legislative Conference was a tremendous success. In these tough economic times, it's more important than ever that counties join together and speak as one voice to our federal representatives on the many critical issues affecting counties and communities.

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City Council
City and County of Honolulu

CLAIM FOR TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Date: 4/12/11

Traveler: Romy M. Cachola

Event: 2011 NACo Legislative Conference

Location: Washington, DC

Dates: From March 5, 2011 To March 9, 2011

Description	Amount	Notes:
1. Registration Fee	490.00	NACo Legislative Conference fee
2. Airfare	1158.20	United Airlines roundtrip Honolulu to Washington, DC
3. Hotel	728.22	Washington Marriott Wardman Park
4. Meals	257.92	
5. Ground Transportation	88.00	
6. Tips	43.21 46.21	
7. Other	139.00	Baggage Fee and Economy Plus
Other		
Other		
8. Adjustment		
TOTAL REIMBURSEMENT	2964.55 2907.55	

This is to certify that the above data, based upon receipts submitted to Council Administrative Support Services via a CCLTRVL02 form, is accurate. Further, I am claiming reimbursement for expenses associated with a trip in which City business was conducted and personal funds were used to advance payment:


Signature of Traveler

APR 13 2011
Date