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2017 Federal Priorities

Balanced Approach to Appropriations

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 and working families desperately need. The League urges Congress to adopt a bipartisan and balanced approach to appropriations that also minimizes spending cuts.

Support Tax Reform and Protect Local Revenue

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

- Support legislation permitting states and localities to require remote sellers to collect state and local sales and use taxes on orders made within their boundaries (e-Fairness);
- Oppose efforts by online travel companies to circumvent remittance of transient occupancy taxes (TOT) from hotel reservations purchased using the internet.
- Support legislation to expand the Low Income Housing Tax Credit by 50% and create incentives to target housing for extremely low-income or homeless families;
- Maintain the tax exempt status of municipal bonds and oppose proposals to cap the investor tax deduction on municipal securities investments.
- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (as proposed by Speaker Ryan and Sen. Tammy Baldwin)

Invest in Infrastructure

There is bipartisan consensus that there is a great need for infrastructure investment. The League urges Congress to support direct investments in local infrastructure and strengthen, maintain, and preserve our aging roads, transit systems, bridges, freight, and water systems.

Support Investments in Affordable Housing

California's cities are deeply concerned with the need for affordable housing for California's families. The League urges Congress to provide resources to support the production of affordable housing to help meet these needs. In addition, the League asks Congress to support proposals such as the HOME Program that provide flexible funding including, grants, loans and loan guarantees to provide and preserve affordable owner-occupied and rental housing.

In addition, California cities are especially concerned with a growing homeless population of more than 118,000 men, women and children – some 78,000 of whom were found unsheltered during the January 2016 point-in-time count. Cities are working hard to confront this complex issue but often lack the resources to bolster effective programs like coordinated placement, rapid rehousing and housing-first programs. Studies show that housing and assisting formerly homeless individuals cost taxpayers a fraction as much as providing services to those living on

the streets, and housing-first policies shown in the placement of homeless veterans a proven success. The League urges Congress to support investments in mental health services, permanent supportive housing and drug treatment, as well as first-responder training. Equally important are investments in preventive efforts, like job training, education and affordable housing.

Improve 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. The League urges Congress and the Administration to adopt 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.

Increase Federal Aviation Administration Coordination with Cities

Cities are concerned with several issues that are under review in the Federal Aviation Administration authorization. The League urges Congress and the Administration to work closely with cities on critical issues within the Federal Aviation Administration, including:

- Oppose efforts to federally pre-empt local regulations concerning drone operations;
- Provide more flexibility for proceeds of state and local taxes collected from aviation fuel sales;
- Require advance community notification of flight path changes and provide opportunities for community input.

Enact Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Like the National League of Cities and many others across our nation, the League urges Congress to address the nation's broken immigration system. In any reforms, local governments must retain the ability for cities to prioritize how scarce local police resources are allocated. Effective local policing, including ongoing efforts to strengthen police-community relations and build trust, will be undermined by the threat of federal sanctions connected to local immigration enforcement.

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.

Maintain 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.

Support Community and Economic Development

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) provide critical funding for community development projects in California cities. The League urges Congress to fund the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at its highest level 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).

Address Banking Challenges of Marijuana Industry

There is a growing public safety threat to our communities and businesses because the marijuana industry is forced to operate on an all-cash basis. The League urges the Congress to make the required changes in federal law to allow lawful marijuana businesses access to the banking industry.

Preserving Local Control Over Installation of Telecommunications Infrastructure

With the rapidly growing and evolving technology of telecommunications, cities have a public duty to protect the public rights of way and residents from potentially intrusive telecommunications infrastructure. Cities strive to protect the safe structural integrity of the overall infrastructure, while working with the telecommunications industry to make the latest technology available to residents and preserving the aesthetic quality and cultures of their communities. The League urges Congress and the Administration to retain local control over the installation of telecommunications infrastructure.