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2018 Federal Priorities

Balanced Approach to Appropriations

The League urges Congress to adopt a bipartisan and balanced approach to appropriations that also minimizes domestic spending cuts.

Direct Investment in Infrastructure

There is bipartisan consensus that there is significant need for infrastructure investment across the country. The League urges Congress to support direct investments in local infrastructure that strengthen, maintain, and preserve our aging roads, transit systems, bridges, freight, water, and broadband systems. Congress and the Administration should continue to support programs, including TIFIA, WIFIA, and the Capital Investment Grants program, which have a proven track record of success delivering critically needed infrastructure projects in cities throughout California.

Support Affordable Housing, Community and Economic Development

Affordable housing is critical to California cities' community and economic development. The League asks Congress to support programs like HOME, which provides flexible funding, as well as grants, loans and loan guarantees to provide and preserve affordable owner-occupied and rental housing. The League also urges Congress to pass legislation to expand the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program by 50 percent and to create incentives to target housing for extremely low-income or homeless families.

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 to support flexibility in the CDBG state program to enhance the use of the program by California's 314 non-entitlement cities (cities under 50,000).

Prevent and Reduce Homelessness

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, rapid re-housing and housing stabilization programs, and drug treatment, as

well as first-responder training. Equally important are investments in preventive efforts, like job training and education.

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 to expedite the provision of real-time information to first responders. In addition, rail tank cars that no longer meet safety standards must be phased-out as soon as possible.

Recognize Voter-Approved Marijuana Laws and Address Banking Challenges of Marijuana Industry

A growing number of states, including California, have voter-approved measures legalizing recreational and medical marijuana. The Federal government must respect the constitutional authority of states to regulate commerce within their own borders. Federal funds should not be used to prevent California from implementing our own laws that authorize the use, distribution, possession, or cultivation of marijuana on non-Federal lands within our state. Further, 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 structural integrity of their infrastructure assets, while working with 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 support local government control over the installation of telecommunications infrastructure.

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 with a comprehensive approach that not only addresses equitable enforcement but also incorporates thoughtful, sensitive and bipartisan solutions to address the pending expiration of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program, and the realities associated with millions of families, students and workers living in California and throughout the country.

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 provide 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.