

# 2018 FEDERAL Legislative Priorities



COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY  
AND LAND USE



FINANCE, PENSIONS AND  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY



INFRASTRUCTURE



## Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

## Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

## Goals



WELL-BEING

### **Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being**

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



PROSPERITY

### **Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty**

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



OPPORTUNITY

### **Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses**

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



ACCOUNTABILITY

### **Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments**

through professional operations and financial management.

Information about how the county is pursuing its mission and goals is available in the county's Strategic Plan at [ramseycounty.us/strategicplan](http://ramseycounty.us/strategicplan)

Information about performance measures related to the county's mission and goals is available in the county's Open Performance portal at [openperformance.ramseycounty.us](http://openperformance.ramseycounty.us)



## **Community, Economic and Workforce Development**

### **NEW: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)**

Maintain this federal program, which was designed to protect young undocumented immigrants from deportation and provide them with legal authorization to work. The DACA program applies to 6,255 youth – often referred to as “Dreamers” – currently living in Minnesota; an estimated 48 percent of these youth live in Ramsey County. Ending the DACA program would remove some 685,000 workers from the nation’s economy and cost Minnesota’s economy more than \$367.7 million in lost annual gross domestic product.

### **NEW: Net Neutrality**

Protect net neutrality, which is the concept of online non-discrimination. Net neutrality is the principle that consumers/citizens should be free to get access to the internet content and services they wish, and that consumer access should not be regulated based on the nature or source of that content or service. Ramsey County Library (RCL) patrons use the internet every day. Last year, RCL provided digital access through 254,000 hours of public computer use, 467,000 wireless sessions, and two million RCL website visits. Of RCL technology users, 27 percent report using these services for employment; 21 percent for education; and 30 percent for health and wellness information.

### **NEW: HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)**

Protect the HOME Program, which provides important funding for affordable housing units in market rate multifamily new construction, foreclosed/forfeit property acquisition, rehabilitation and resale, and down-payment assistance to first-time homebuyers throughout suburban Ramsey County cities. Ramsey County is part of a four-county consortium and currently receives approximately \$400,000 per year, a reduction of more than \$350,000 per year over the past 10 years. HOME is also an important source of program income from loan repayments, allowing additional investment in affordable properties.

### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Protect the CDBG Program. CDBG supports community development programs that provide assistance to low- and moderate-income persons in suburban Ramsey County. Ramsey County currently receives approximately \$1 million, down 50 percent from historic levels. (NACo)



## **Environment, Energy and Land Use**

### **Renewable Energy Policy**

Increase federal funding for research and development toward the goal of identifying and supporting new and emerging renewable energy technologies. (NACo)

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LAWCON)**

Maintain LAWCON funding, which provides outdoor recreation grants to develop and redevelop parks. Ramsey County has received more than \$860,000 for park projects since LAWCON was enacted in 1964.



## **Finance, Pensions and Intergovernmental Affairs**

### ***NEW: State and Local Tax Deduction (SALT)***

Maintain the state and local tax deductions, which allows taxpayers to deduct state and local taxes paid from their federally taxable income, preventing double taxation. This provision has existed in federal law for over a century. In 2015, 85,430 Ramsey County households used this deduction, which amounted to \$1.1 billion. By eliminating SALT, taxes would increase for almost 30 percent of taxpayers in America, representing a shift of nearly \$1.3 trillion from the middle class to the wealthiest Americans. (NACo)

### **Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds**

Continue availability of tax-exempt bonds for local municipalities. Issuance of tax-exempt municipal bonds is the primary method used by Ramsey County to finance capital improvement and infrastructure projects, which increases infrastructure investment and provides jobs and economic development opportunities. (NACo)



## **Health and Human Services**

### ***NEW: Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)***

Reauthorize CHIP and maintain current funding levels, which sends approximately \$115 million annually to Minnesota. Statewide, CHIP provides health care access to an estimated 125,000 low-income children and pregnant women. A short -term extension of the program provides funding into March 2018.

### ***NEW: Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)***

Reauthorize MIECHV and maintain current funding levels, which allocated nearly \$8.6 million to Minnesota in 2017. This funding is used in Minnesota to develop and implement a variety of voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs that improve maternal and newborn health, reduce child injuries and maltreatment, improve school readiness, reduce crime, improve family economic self-sufficiency and enhance referrals for other community resources.

### **Social Services Block Grant funding (SSBG)**

Maintain SSBG block grants. SSBG supports services such as adult protective services, special needs childcare, child welfare and child abuse prevention. (NACo)

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

Preserve the SNAP program in its current form. SNAP provides food assistance to nearly 63,000 low-income families in Ramsey County. The SNAP Education and Training program, which provides support services (such as child care and transportation) to SNAP-enrolled students, is a central component to helping families achieve and maintain economic stability.

### **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**

Protect essential provisions of the ACA, including: coverage for pre-existing conditions, dependent coverage until age 26, no limits on annual/lifetime coverage, no-cost coverage for preventative care, and the mandate for individual coverage. Support the local-state-federal partnership structure for financing health care access and oppose measures that shift federal and state costs to counties.

**Medicaid Services Financing**

Enhance flexibility in the Medicaid program to support local care systems. Preserve the ability to match local funds and receive targeted supplemental payments, as well as the federal-state-local partnership structures for Medicaid services. (NACo)

**Mental Health Parity**

Support the consistent funding for mental health services provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as legislation that will increase Ramsey County’s ability to provide local systems of care. Funding for the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) block grant should be held to at least FY 2017 levels in the FY 2018 Labor-HHS Education appropriations bill. (NACo)

**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

Increase investment in TANF. TANF funds are a major component of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), which provides financial assistance to nearly 18,000 low-income Ramsey County families. TANF also helps pay for child care assistance for MFIP families and supports county employment services. (NACo)


**Justice and Public Safety**
**Second Chance Act (SCA)**

Reauthorize the Second Chance Act. The Second Chance Act assists counties in reducing the rate of recidivism and helps facilitate reentry programs for previously incarcerated individuals. (NACo)

**Juvenile Justice Programs**

Sustain funding for juvenile justice programs. Without this funding, more youth would face a greater risk of harm during incarceration.


**Infrastructure**
**UPDATED: Passenger Rail**

Increase support for passenger rail through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program, and authorize a State of Good Repair grant program. Provide funding for rail improvements from Union Depot in Saint Paul, MN to Chicago, IL, which will enable a second daily passenger train for this corridor and for the completion of an environmental assessment of existing rails.

**Transportation Reauthorization**

Sustained transportation reauthorization will benefit the following Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Projects involving Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul:

- Riverview Corridor:** Between Union Depot and the Mall of America (Bloomington).
- Metro Gold Line Corridor (Gateway):** Between Union Depot and Woodbury.
- Rush Line Corridor:** Between Union Depot and White Bear Lake.
- Red Rock Corridor:** Between Union Depot and Hastings.
- Second Daily Train:** Between Union Depot and Chicago.

### **Strengthen Urban Communities**

Support federal partnership in infrastructure investment, training and job programs for Ramsey County residents.

### **Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**

Implement provisions in the FAST Act, reauthorizing highway and transit programs, as well as Amtrak, through 2020, including:

- Expanded funding options for programs under the Capital Investment Grant program (Core Capacity/Small Starts/Fixed Guideway Capital Projects).
- Conversion of the Surface Transportation block grant program.
- Modifications to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, making transit-oriented projects eligible to apply for TIFIA loans.
- Fully fund capital improvement grants.

### **Clean Water**

Support investment and funding for infrastructure improvements relating to any contamination of water systems, as well as improved corrosion control, lead monitoring and public notification of contaminants in public drinking water. Support improvement of storm water, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.

## **Ramsey County Support of Other Platforms**

In addition to the recommendations contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

- The National Association of Counties (NACo) and its associated professional organizations.

The county board reserves the option to oppose individual items in the NACo platform that are contrary to the interests of the county.

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