

2019 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

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



Community, Economic and Workforce Development

NEW: Protect Basic Human Rights of Immigrants

Oppose increased efforts to discourage immigrants from accessing public assistance, such as housing, medical assistance, basic cash support and law enforcement protection. Like most other residents and citizens, immigrants seek public assistance as a last resort, and only in times of temporary, intense need for basic services that may arise as they work to achieve or maintain self-sufficiency. Inhibiting immigrants through fear or threat of consequence when they need services, deprives them of access and denies them the opportunities to build stable lives for themselves, their families and to contribute to the communities in which they live. Further, access to legal representation should be available when deportation or family unity is threatened.

UPDATED: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)

Maintain DACA, 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 nearly \$368 million in lost annual gross domestic product. Further, support other forms of protected or deferred status such as TPS and DED to support families, recognize immigrant contributions to our economy and to protect them from returning to countries that threaten their safety.

NEW: 2020 Census

The next full census is due in 2020. Extensive preparation and coordination with federal, state and local government partners requires adequate funding from the federal government. If the census does not yield an accurate count and in fact, misses a significant number of residents, Minnesota could lose one of its eight congressional seats and an electoral college vote. The most likely residents to be missed are immigrants, both legal and illegal, who may avoid being counted in the 2020 out of fear related to recent immigration regulation disruptions. Ramsey County has the highest number of immigrants per capita amongst Minnesota counties; therefore, an efficiently-run census operation with accurate outcomes is important the county.

Net Neutrality

Protect net neutrality, the principle that consumers/citizens should be free to access 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. Last year, Ramsey County Library (RCL) provided digital access through 254,000 hours of public computer use, 467,000 wireless sessions, and two million RCL website visits. RCL technology users, 27 percent report using these services for employment; 21 percent for education; and 30 percent for health and wellness information.

In December 2017, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to repeal its net neutrality rules for Internet providers. The agency also rejected some of its own authority over the broadband industry in a bid to hinder future FCC officials who might seek to reverse the ruling. Both the House and Senate have resolutions that would reverse the FCC’s decision. Though the Senate passed their version in 2018 the House has yet to take it up. This Legislation should be reintroduced in 2019.

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. The President's FY2019 budget would eliminate funding for HOME. Congress will need to address this important funding in 2019, and oppose the President's budget proposal.

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. The Senate has proposed \$3.3 billion for 2019, while the President has proposed eliminating the CDBG program altogether (NACo).



Environment, Energy and Land Use

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LAWCON)

Maintain LAWCON authorization and 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.

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.

Regional Solicitation for Federal Funds

An application submitted by Ramsey County in 2018 for the Bruce Vento Regional Trail extension from Buerkle Road to Highway 96 is currently under federal review. If funds are received, implementation would occur in 2022. The total federal share requested is \$4,026,278. Ramsey County is required to match 20 percent of these federal funds, which would amount to \$1,006,570.



Health and Human Services

Social Services Block Grant funding (SSBG)

Maintain SSBG block grants at the current funding level of \$1.7 billion for FY2019. 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. This law has proven effective in significantly expanding access to insurance to more low and moderate-income families and individuals. Ramsey County supports premium assistance to help keep the cost of insurance within reach.

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****Juvenile Justice Programs**

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

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)

Ramsey County has successfully transformed juvenile incarceration practices over the past decade with the help of grants and county funds. This is an expensive and time-consuming effort to reduce inappropriate detention for low- and medium-risk youth. Ramsey County has significantly reduced daily population levels at the Juvenile Detention Center. Ramsey County has successfully diverted many at-risk and troubled youth to alternative programs and has improved outcomes for most of them. The JDAI program reduces recidivism and reduces public safety expenditures and narrows disparities in treatment of minority youth. Ramsey County requests the Federal Government to provide funding to expand this important program for all communities, creating long term savings and better outcomes.



Infrastructure

Ramsey County will continue its long commitment to working across all levels of government to maximize funding opportunities. The county is encouraged by the focus on federal transportation investment by the Trump administration and will continue to be a proactive partner to our congressional delegation and US Department of Transportation.

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.

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.

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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