

# NACo Legislative Bulletin

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## Congress Passes Stop Gap Measure Including Human Services Extenders

### Another FAA Extension

### Employer Provided Cell Phones no Longer Listed Property

### USDA Announces Funding for Regional Economic Development Projects

### USDA Announces Funding for Rural Libraries

## **Congress Passes Stop Gap Measure Including Human Services Extenders**

On September 29, Congress passed a continuing resolution to keep the federal government running through December 3 and recessed until after the elections. The measure (H.R. 3081) funds most programs at FY2010 levels. It passed the House by a vote of 228-194 and the Senate by a vote of 69-30.

In addition to the stop gap funding, the continuing resolution includes short-term extensions of several human services programs that would have otherwise expired September 30. These include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family Block Grant (TANF), the TANF supplemental grants, the TANF contingency fund, the School Lunch and other child nutrition programs, and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

The child support enforcement incentive match was not extended, but it may be taken up in the lame duck session. The TANF emergency contingency fund was not extended either. Another provision that was allowed to expire was Supplemental Security Income for approximately 5600 elderly and disabled refugees.

The child nutrition program short-term extension was included in the continuing resolution because the House did not take up the Senate four-year reauthorization bill (S.3307). The Senate bill is paid in part by a reduction in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program payments, which has become quite controversial. This is another issue that will have to be resolved during the lame duck session.

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### **Another FAA Extension**

Congress on September 25 passed a three-month extension of the federal aviation and airport programs. This is the 16th extension since the program expired in 2007 and will continue the program until the end of 2010. Included in the extension is the authority to continue collecting the various taxes that fund the programs and the authority to spend the money. It is possible that a final FAA reauthorization bill could be passed when



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Congress returns after the November 2 elections but in many ways the politics of passing legislation may be even more complicated then. While many of the issues separating the House and Senate-passed bills have been resolved and many of NACo's concerns are addressed, at least three issues are outstanding whether there will be an increase in the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) above the current \$4.50 ceiling; whether more long distance flights will be permitted from Washington Reagan National Airport; and whether a labor provision governing organizing of UPS and Fed EX employees should be in the FAA bill.

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### **Employer Provided Cell Phones no Longer Listed Property**

On September 27, President Obama signed the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010. The law includes a provision that modernizes the tax code by removing cell phones and other similar telecommunications equipment from the definition of listed property. Prior to this, the benefit an employee receives using an employer provided phone was excluded from income as long as the use was for business purposes. To substantiate the business use, employees were required to keep records of every call made on the employer provided cell phone and its business purpose. Removing cell phones and similar telecommunications equipment from listed property now relieves both employers and employees of the onerous requirements.

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### **USDA Announces Funding for Regional Economic Development Projects**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on September 23 a series of awards that provide the first concrete funding for USDA's new focus on rural regional economic development strategies. USDA awarded \$3.3 million in Recovery Act Broadband Program funding to help communities work together on a regional basis to develop strategic plans to attract broadband investment and best use their broadband capability for economic development. The agency also awarded \$2.5 million in Rural Business Opportunity Grants, with most of the funding targeted at regional economic development efforts. NACo has urged Congress and the Administration to provide this type of flexible regional funding that gives priority to local planning processes.

Secretary Vilsack also announced the availability of \$6.2 million in technical assistance to help rural communities develop their capacity to undertake economic development, housing and community facilities projects. The money will be provided through USDA Rural Development's Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI). This program includes a focus on projects that will help develop and build strong regional economies. Counties are eligible to apply for these funds or can seek technical assistance from grantees. The full list of awardees and the RCDI announcement are available [here](#).

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### **USDA Announces Funding for Rural Libraries**

On September 24, USDA awarded \$15 million to projects in 30 states that will build and enhance libraries in 129 rural communities across the nation. The projects are being funded through USDA's Community Facilities Program with Recovery Act resources. Many of the funded projects are county owned libraries. NACo led the effort to include this rural program in the Recovery Act. The full list of awardees and the award announcement are available [here](#).

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## About

National Association of Counties (NACO) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the U. S. NACO provides essential services to the nation' s 3,068 counties. NACO advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money.

## NACo

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