



2018 NATaT Federal Platform



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Federal Priorities for the 115th Congress

Infrastructure Priorities

NATaT supports efforts in Washington to shore up our nation's infrastructure. The Administration's proposal suggests that the federal government should fund up to 20% of a project's total cost. Most local governments will be unable to fund priority projects without a larger contribution from the federal government. The proposal also includes a \$50B set-aside for rural infrastructure projects. However, the entirety of those funds will be funneled through the states. This is not the most effective or efficient way to get federal funds to local priorities. NATaT supports direct funding from the relevant federal agencies to local governments for infrastructure projects. Our towns and townships are in the best position to know where to direct these much-needed funds. NATaT also believes the \$50B set-aside of the total \$200B is insufficient to even begin tackling our failing infrastructure. We applaud the Administration's proposals to streamline environmental regulations making it possible for projects to be completed in a more timely, less costly manner.

Broadband

Broadband Access

NATaT supports efforts to streamline deployment *without* preempting local control over local siting decisions, fees and time to review applications, which are tenets of a community's right to self-govern. NATaT strongly supports efforts to ensure that all households have access to high-speed broadband with a primary focus of deployment in non-urban, rural areas where access is the most limited. As such, NATaT supports broadband deployment legislation as part of the Administration's infrastructure package.

Rural Broadband Congressional Caucus

NATaT supports the efforts of the Rural Broadband Caucus in both the House and Senate to facilitate discussion, educate Members of Congress, and develop policy solutions to close the digital divide in rural America.

Transportation

Rural Set-Asides

NATaT supports the existing set-asides for rural projects in various transportation programs, as well as the Administration's priority for funding projects in rural areas through its competitive grant programs. NATaT also wants to ensure that the federal Department of Transportation understands the reality of its "rural" definition, which is defined as an area that is outside an urbanized area with a population of over 200,000. To our nation's towns and townships, 200,000 is not "rural." The definition of rural should be less than 200,000.

Oppose Efforts to Allow Larger, Heavier Vehicles on Our Roads and Bridges

NATaT opposes efforts to increase the national truck weight limit on the federal highway system, and efforts to allow longer, wider double- and triple-trailer trucks on federal highways.

Caution Against Efforts to Implement Vehicle Miles Traveled Fees

NATaT wants to ensure that any effort to impose VMT fees takes into account the limited transportation options for rural residents and the resulting need to use their vehicles to access work and daily services.

[Farm Bill](#)

[NATaT Supports a Robust Rural Development Title in the Farm Bill Reauthorization](#)

NATaT supports a Rural Development Title that promotes economic growth and stability by investing in our nation's rural infrastructure, incentivizes regional collaboration and ensures the success of our next generation of farmers. We support the Administration's goal of connecting rural American communities, homes, farms, businesses, first responders, educational facilities, and healthcare facilities to reliable and affordable high-speed internet services.

[Tax Priorities](#)

[Tax-Exempt Municipal Bonds](#)

NATaT supports preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds that have helped build public infrastructure for more than 200 years. These bonds enable state and local governments to access necessary capital for critical infrastructure projects. Additionally, NATaT supports restoring tax-exempt advance refunding bonds. Those bonds – or the ability to refinance tax-exempt bonds at a lower rate – were not preserved in the tax law. NATaT also supports legislation that would treat certain municipal bonds as high quality liquid assets when calculating a bank's liquidity coverage ratio. Excluding municipal bonds increases local governments' borrowing costs.

[Tax Incentives for Volunteer First Responders](#)

NATaT supports Congressional efforts to provide small tax incentives to recruit and retain local government emergency first responders. Volunteer firefighters alone save communities of all sizes \$129 billion a year, and represent 71% of all firefighters in the U.S. Of the total number of volunteer firefighters, 95% service communities with a population of 25,000 or less.

[Cadillac Tax](#)

NATaT supports continued efforts to repeal the "Cadillac Tax," which imposes a 40% excise tax on certain employer-provided healthcare plans. Implementation of the tax has been extended to 2020.

[Online Sales Tax](#)

NATaT supports efforts to require online and catalog retailers (remote sellers) to collect sales tax to allow Main Street retailers to compete on a level playing field. Legislation is needed to allow local and state governments to enforce their own sales and use tax laws on remote sellers and recover an estimated \$26.1 billion per year of lost revenues.

[Unfunded Mandates and Federal Preemption](#)

[Protect Towns and Townships from Increased Federal Regulations](#)

NATaT supports a common-sense review and re-write of the EPA's pending "*Waters of the U.S.*" rule that would expand the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. NATaT also supports changes to the Department of Labor's *Overtime Rule* that would increase the salary threshold criteria for exempt employees. However, the salary threshold criteria recommended in the last Administration would have severely impacted local government budgets across the country. NATaT would support a more modest increase. Finally, NATaT cautions against potential unfunded mandates resulting from standards unsupported by scientific risk assessment in the EPA's re-write of its *Lead and Copper Rule* that could result in significant cost burdens on state and local governments and their public water systems.

Protect Local Control Over Local Issues

NATaT opposes federal government involvement in issues that should be resolved at the local level by elected public officials who are closest to the people affected. The federal government should limit its involvement in issues such as personnel matters, land use decisions, economic development, and delivery of local government services, and give local elected officials maximum flexibility in selecting the best options to achieve local priorities. For example, local control must be preserved over wireless deployment, including local land use and rights of way regulations. Wireless service providers should not be given eminent domain authority or be granted public utility status to avoid local regulations that protect public safety.

Federal Funding

Maintain Federal Support for Local Priorities

NATaT supports efforts to control federal spending but supports increased, or at least level funding for those federal programs that promote local economic development, create jobs, and generate tax revenues to all levels of government. They include: USDA's Rural Development programs; FEMA's State and Local Programs, particularly Fire Act Grants; and Economic Development Administration programs.

Fair Allocation Policies

NATaT supports budget allocation policies that are fair to towns and townships. A disproportionate amount of federal program dollars are directed to larger metropolitan communities, such as federal transportation and community development funds. While those communities have significant needs, so do our nation's smaller communities. Allowing smaller local governments to access funding directly, and in the same manner as large municipalities, will enhance job creation and economic development in communities throughout the country.

The National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) is the voice for more than 10,000 towns and townships across the country seeking to enhance the ability of smaller communities to deliver public services, economic vitality, and good government to their citizens. America's towns and townships seek to partner with the federal government to ensure that public laws, policies, regulations, and resources support our role in fostering local democracy.

There are approximately 39,000 units of local government in the United States. Of that number, 85 percent serve communities with less than 10,000 people and nearly half have fewer than 1,000 residents. Approximately one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas, roughly the same percentage as live in central cities. NATaT was formed more than 40 years ago to provide those smaller communities a strong voice in Washington, D.C. NATaT's purpose today, as it was then, is to champion pro-town and -township federal initiatives and to promote legislative and regulatory policies designed to strengthen smaller units of local government.

NATaT has developed a proactive federal agenda to ensure that the needs and interests of the nation's smaller communities are reflected in all major federal statutory, regulatory, funding, and policy decisions made in Washington. NATaT is eager to work in collaboration with the other local government associations, the Administration, and Congress to achieve these goals.

NATaT members include town and township officials represented by the following state associations:

Township Officials of Illinois

Michigan Townships Association

Minnesota Association of Townships

Association of Towns of the State of New York

North Dakota Township Officers Association

Ohio Township Association

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors

Wisconsin Towns Association



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