



Unified Government Federal Legislative Agenda

113th Congress

**Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas
701 North 7th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101**

Preserve Funds For Hometown Investment

The Federal Government is a valuable partner in helping local governments provide important services to citizens. Funding for many longstanding Federal programs must be preserved, including:

- **Community Development Block Grants:** The CDBG program is used for programs that directly assist those with the greatest needs in the community. At current funding levels, the UG receives \$2.7 million annually in CDBG funding. These funds are used for several programs, including emergency home repair for residents whose income is 60% or below the area's median income, a multi-service center (which includes a food kitchen), that assists the homeless and near homeless, and support for the KCK Continuum of Care. Severe cuts in CDBG would force severe reductions of these programs, creating a real hardship for many of our most vulnerable residents. CDBG is a smart, long-term investment in our nation's communities. CDBG funding does not stay in city hall; in fact, it goes to local businesses, builders and contractors, and service providers who transform the neighborhoods in which they do business. Every dollar of CDBG funding a city or town receives leverages an additional \$1.62 in non-CDBG funding. Full funding for CDBG connects private sector growth to the revitalization of entire communities.
- **Transit Funding:** Having an affordable, reliable transit system is more important than ever. Transit is a crucial component that is necessary to ensure people can get to their jobs in an efficient manner, especially with new jobs being added due to the developments at Village West. The continued development of a bus rapid transit (BRT) line along State Avenue continues to be a top priority, as well as other improvements that can reduce costs and increase ridership in the entire transit system. Restoring federal funding for public mass transit systems on a local project basis is critical. The Unified Government also supports maintaining funding levels and local control of how Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program funding is spent on projects that reduce congestion and air pollution in the Kansas City region.
- **Justice Assistance Grants:** JAG grants are critical to the Kansas City Kansas Police department in providing efficient and effective public safety protection to citizens. Current JAG funding to the KCK Police Department pays for six positions in the Tele-serve program, which allows citizens to easily file police reports and keeps police officers on the streets to protect and serve.
- **Water Development Resources Act:** The WRDA Federal grant program is vital in funding needed upkeep and improvement of the river levee system protecting Kansas City from floods on both the Missouri and Kansas rivers.

Federal Budget Reductions

Deficit reduction should not be accomplished by shifting costs to cities and counties and their residents; imposing unfunded mandates; or preempting city and county programs or taxing authority. Federal assistance to state and local governments will help mitigate further layoffs and Federal investment in state and local infrastructure produces private sector jobs.

Assistance with Federal Agencies

The rulemakings and decisions of the federal executive branch can have a tremendous impact on a local community. Currently the Unified Government and Board of Public Utilities are looking at several pending individual decisions and pending rulemakings that could potentially create real economic hardship for the people they serve in a time when they can least afford it. We appreciate the continued efforts of our Congressional delegation to ensure actions taken by the agencies are

carefully measured and thought through so as not produce unnecessary economic harm to the community.

Combined Sewer Overflow

The Unified Government and the residents they serve want clean water and want to fix sewer overflow problems that arise during heavy rain events. However more flexibility is needed on the part of the federal agencies. Past settlement proposals would cost UG residents nearly \$1 billion over 20 years. It is estimated that this would push up customer rates from the current average of \$25 per month up to over \$100 per month in a short period of time. Many residents simply cannot afford this. The Unified Government urges the federal government to be more flexible and innovative when working to solve these complex issues. The Unified Government supports establishment of a federal loan assistance program to help pay for the costs of meeting the expensive environmental mandates imposed by the EPA and Department of Justice regarding combined sewer overflows and expected new regulations governing storm water runoff.

Funding for Critical Infrastructure

The Unified Government and its publically owned utility, the Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU) have aging infrastructure that will cost residents if not addressed. Two priorities are to upgrade emergency operations equipment to improve emergency response capabilities, and replacing aging water mains in KCK that often rupture and cost the BPU increasing amounts each year to repair. The federal government needs to expand and create innovative programs to assist local governments trying to address a host of infrastructure needs. Proposals to expand programs like Build America Bonds and the creation of a federal infrastructure bank to provide low-cost financing options for local governments should be continue to be an important policy objective in the 113th Congress.

Transportation

Partner with local governments to meet America's pressing transportation infrastructure needs by authorizing a new federal surface transportation program that recognizes the central role of transportation to metropolitan and regional economies, includes the local voice in planning and project selection, and chooses the best mix of transportation options to fit the needs of the region. Provide full funding for federal transportation programs and give priority to those that promote long-term outcomes, protect the environment, create jobs, and help the economy recover. The condition of our nation's infrastructure is vital to our economic recovery and growth. As local governments continue to struggle under mounting budget shortfalls, federal support for infrastructure is even more critical, not only to fund overdue repairs but to also put individuals and communities back to work.

Immigration

America's immigration system is broken, and cities and counties are suffering the consequences. Enact comprehensive immigration reform that: fortifies border security and enforcement; recognizes the human and civil rights of citizens and non-citizens; strengthens penalties for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers; creates an admission program for temporary workers to qualify for legal permanent residency; includes local governments in an integration strategy for new immigrants, provides fiscal support for city and state governments that disproportionately shoulder the costs of the current immigration system; and establishes a legalization process whereby the 12-million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States may earn legalized status through payment of appropriate fees and back taxes, background checks, absence of criminal or gang activity, consistent work history, meeting English and civics requirements, and "waiting their place in line."

Municipal Bonds

The Unified Government supports the removal or modification of overly burdensome and costly restrictions affecting the issuance of municipal bonds. Further, we support the continued tax-exempt status for municipal bonds and the IRS tax credit for Build America Bonds; Economic Recovery Zone Bonds and Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds.

Telecommunications Taxes

The Unified Government categorically oppose restrictions on the ability of cities to impose and collect taxes and fees on telecommunications providers.

Internet Sales

The Unified Government urges Congress and the Administration to support legislation to allow state and local governments the flexibility to collect the taxes owed to them on remote online purchases, thereby placing brick and mortar corner stores on a level playing field with online retailers and affording consumers more choice through fair competition.