



**Unified Government
Federal Legislative Agenda
114th Congress
2015**

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

Federal Issues

Marketplace Fairness Act

The Unified Government urges Congress to take action to implement the mandatory collection of sales and use taxes on remote sales. The legislation should not preempt state and local sales and use tax authority. Should federal legislation allow for the state imposition of such taxes, we support the distribution of those funds to cities and counties using an equitable formula. Kansas should continue to participate in the Streamlined Sales Tax Project. The Unified Government opposes language concerning telecommunications taxes that would threaten both local government revenues and successful implementation of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement.

Immigration Reform

The Unified Government supports a federal solution to immigration reform that allows reasonable access to citizenship while assuring adequate border security and protecting our economy and workforce. Any immigration solution should not negatively impact local governments with additional law enforcement or administrative burdens.

Waters of the United States

The Unified Government encourages Congress and the Federal administration to approach water in the following manner:

- Clarify that municipal streets and man-made ditches are excluded from the definition of “waters of the United States” and that local government should regulate these waters.
- Recognize that the regulation of impervious surfaces and the regulation of storm-water flow-volume from development is a local land issue, not within the purview of the federal government.
- Continue the national policy goal of net gain/no net loss of wetlands with a management approach that first avoids development of current wetlands, then minimizes wetland loss, then mitigates as the final alternative. These goals should include additional funding for local government implementation.

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.

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. Currently funded at \$3.07-billion, CDBG has been cut by 25 percent (\$1 billion) since FY2010. Funding should be restored to \$3.3 billion
- **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.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Unified Government opposes cuts to the federal nutrition programs as part of Farm Bill and deficit reduction negotiations. In Wyandotte County, 43,503 (28% of the population) rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) every month. Cuts to SNAP mean more people will fall into poverty and illness. Not only does SNAP help people from falling into poverty, it also enables low-income households to afford more healthy foods. Fruits and vegetables, grain products, meats, and dairy products comprise almost 90 percent of the food that SNAP households buy.

Medicaid Reform

The Unified Government supports Medicaid reform that maintains the federal government's primary responsibility for providing health care to the country's most vulnerable citizens. Medicaid must maintain a robust set of both mandatory and optional services to meet the full range of needs of our citizens. Further, we oppose termination of Medicaid benefits when an individual is incarcerated in a county facility pre-adjudication.

Mandates

The Unified Government opposes unfunded federal and state mandates regulating the operation of municipal gas, water, electric, sewer, telecommunications, solid waste, storm water utilities, or other utility services. Any mandates which are passed down to cities should not be imposed without a cost/benefit analysis and should be accompanied by appropriate funding. In addition, regulations should provide for a reasonable implementation schedule. 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.

Telecommunications Taxes

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

Protect Municipal Bonds

As the Administration and Congress look for revenue to reduce the deficit and fund programs, the federal income tax exemption provided to interest paid on state and municipal bonds (debt) is under threat. In addition to increasing taxes, the federal government can raise revenue by expanding what is subject to being taxed (broadening the base); as an alternative to raising taxes, interest paid on bonds issued by local governments currently not taxed could lose their exemption from taxation. The Unified Government opposes any attempt to eliminate or limit the traditional tax exemption for municipal bonds whether as a part of a deficit reduction plan, a push for comprehensive tax reform, or as an offset for new spending.

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.

Postal Service in Urban Neighborhoods

The Unified Government opposes further cuts in service or the closing of United States Post Offices in urban neighborhoods.

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.