

IDAHO ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Grassroots Advocacy on Federal, State and County Policy Priorities

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WHY IT MATTERS

County officials are among the most powerful advocates in Washington.



You represent real places

When you walk into a congressional office, you bring your community — not just a talking point.



Officials carry credibility

A call or letter on official letterhead from an elected county official carries weight that comes from being an intergovernmental partner.



Your stories move policy

Federal decision-makers need local context. County officials are the closest to residents and best able to be the local voice on the hill.

The County Pulse Survey

County officials said they want to advocate more — but lack the tools, data and guidance to do it effectively.

WHAT THE SURVEY FOUND

32% of respondents want direct engagement with federal policymakers

24% of respondents want advocacy and messaging support

16% of respondents want help facilitating meetings and strengthening federal connections

NACo'S RESPONSE

- Created this grassroots initiative
- Established a dedicated staff position: Associate Director for Grassroots & Legislative Advocacy
- Built the County Grassroots Advocacy Hub and associated resources

Your one-stop resource for federal advocacy.

01

Find your members
of Congress

02

Active advocacy
campaigns

03

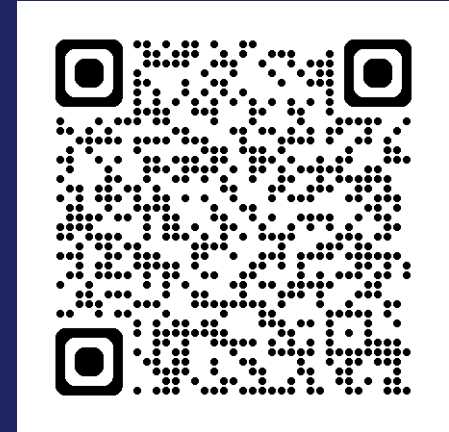
Policy steering
committees

04

Grassroots
webinar series

05

Get
involved



Scan the QR code to visit the Grassroots
Advocacy Hub

SECTION 01 — FIND YOUR MEMBERS

Look up your members of Congress in seconds.



Your two U.S. Senators and House Representative



Direct office contact information for each member



Search by county, district, committee, or member name

Find your members of Congress

Search for your county to instantly see your U.S. Senators and House Representative, along with their direct office contact information.

By county

By district

By committee

By member of Congress

COUNTY
e.g. Harris County, Texas

Look up

Clear

Legend: District counties, Rest of state, Other states, Hovered county

No results yet.
Use the search box above.

ⓘ Connecticut and Rhode Island are not included in the source data and cannot be searched.

% of county = share of county area inside the district. *% of district* = share of district area from that county. Connecticut and Rhode Island not in source data. Congressional data is for the 119th Congress. Use with the latest IT-provided crosswalk data loaded above this block.

Issues where your voice can move the needle right now.



Farm Bill Reauthorization

State of play and county priorities in the farm bill.



Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)

Offsetting lost tax revenue from federal land.



Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS)

The WOTUS definition directly impacts county infrastructure.



Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy

A new toolkit to advocate on the exclusion policy.



FEMA Act County Advocacy

Four top county wins in the FEMA Act, explained.



Surface Transportation Reauthorization

Funding the nation's infrastructure and transportation networks.

Shape NACo's agenda. Don't just receive it.



Agriculture & Rural Affairs



Community, Economic & Workforce Development



Environment, Energy & Land Use



Finance, Pensions & Intergovernmental Affairs



Health



Human Services & Education



Justice & Public Safety



Public Lands



Telecommunications & Technology



Transportation

Effective outreach isn't accidental. It's planned.

1

Identify your priority issue

Pick one advocacy campaign that is most relevant to your county right now.



2

Find your local data

Use County Explorer to pull numbers specific to your county.



3

Make your ask

Connect that data to a clear, specific request for your member. You can use NACo's template letters or make it your own.

COUNTY EXPLORER — WHAT IS IT?

The data tool that makes your ask specific.

WHAT COUNTY EXPLORER GIVES YOU



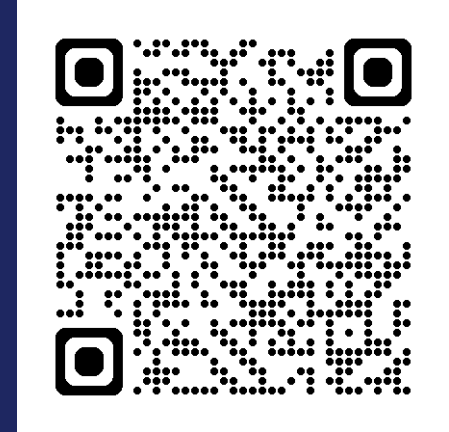
County-level data across multiple policy areas



Data sets matched to active NACo advocacy campaigns



Downloadable numbers and informational one-pagers you can use in meetings and letters



Scan to explore your county's data

Compare counties on the data that matters to you.

Access county and state-level data summaries on topics such as bridge inventory, housing affordability, Payment in Lieu of Taxes, and veterans — all through a user-friendly interface.

14

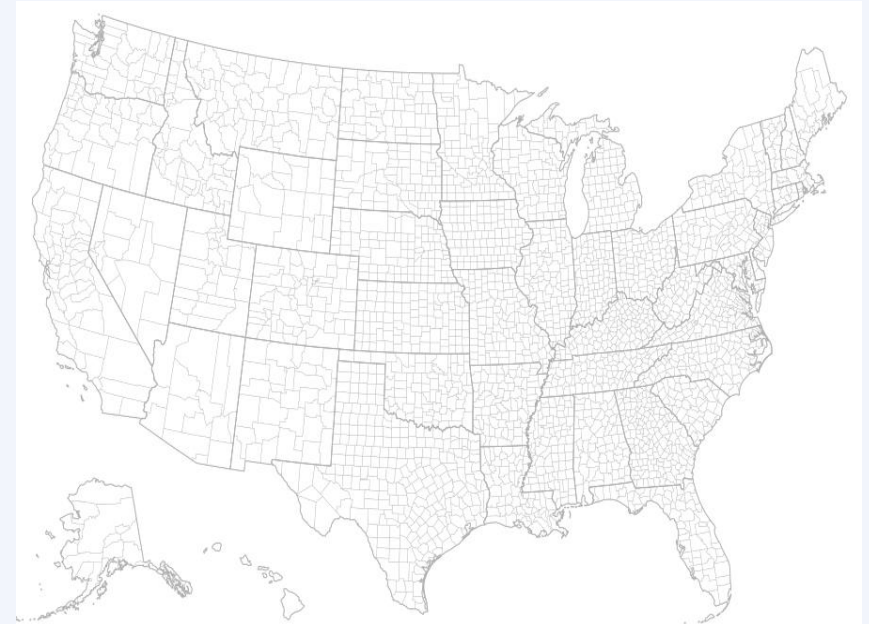
categories

100+

datasets

1,000+

data points



County-level data, nationwide

Fourteen categories. One search tool.

County Finance

Revenues, expenditures

County Workforce

Employment, wages

Economy

Employment, income, poverty, GDP

Energy and Environment

Energy production

Health & Human Services

Insurance, chronic conditions, Medicaid

Justice & Public Safety

Jails, emergency services

Public Lands

PILT, federal acreage

County Governance

Structure, elections, officials, policy

Demographics

Population, age, race

Education

Attainment, enrollment

Federal Funding

Grants, PILT, formula funds, direct payments

Housing & Community Dev.

Affordability, CDBG, permits

Natural Disasters

FEMA declarations, hazard risk, resilience

Transportation & Infrastructure

Roads, bridges, transit, commute data

14

data categories,
one search tool

*Every category is searchable by county,
state, or congressional district.*

Connect your committee to your data categories.

POLICY STEERING COMMITTEE		COUNTY EXPLORER CATEGORIES
Agriculture & Rural Affairs	→	Economy, Federal Funding, Natural Disasters
Community, Economic & Workforce Development	→	Economy, County Workforce, Housing & Community Dev., Federal Funding
Environment, Energy & Land Use	→	Energy and Environment, Public Lands, Natural Disasters
Finance, Pensions & Intergovernmental Affairs	→	County Finance, Federal Funding, County Governance
Health	→	Health & Human Services, Demographics, Federal Funding
Human Services & Education	→	Health & Human Services, Education, Demographics, Housing & Community Dev.
Justice & Public Safety	→	Justice & Public Safety, County Finance, Demographics
Public Lands	→	Public Lands, Federal Funding, Energy and Environment
Telecommunications & Technology	→	County Governance, Economy, Federal Funding
Transportation	→	Transportation & Infrastructure, County Finance, Federal Funding

One tool. Every county. Every policy conversation.

Compare counties across 14 categories, 100+ datasets, and 1,000+ data points on local issues — including economies, transportation & infrastructure, and health & public safety.



Research

Pull county-level numbers for any of the 14 policy categories.



Target

Match your data to an active NACo advocacy campaign.



Share

Download a one-pager and bring it to your next meeting.

Public Lands Grassroots Data Collection

Counties carry costs on federal land that no one is systematically capturing.

What Counties Can Document

The operational burden counties carry in supporting public lands

County emergency response costs from wildfire and other disasters on public lands, impacting county jurisdictions

County search and rescue operations on public lands

Gauge what each county can realistically take on

For example, GIS tracking of where search and rescues occur and their cost

Following the Payments

Transparency in the shared-revenue pipeline

Prior-year payment retention and state reporting to Interior

How much states keep and what reaches counties?

Collecting the data in partnership with state associations

For example, associations gathering the filings states send to Interior

DISCUSSION

What can each partner realistically collect, given differences in capacity?

Contact: ncplc@naco.org

PART 2 • IN-DISTRICT ADVOCACY

You have the tool. Now what?

NACo'S NEW TOOLKIT

“Congress in Your Community: A County Official’s Guide to In-District Engagement”

- Defining a District Office versus a Capitol Hill Office
- Requesting a district meeting or site visit
- Making the most of the August & October recess windows
- Turning one good meeting into a lasting relationship

Why Engage at Home?

Congressional recesses — officially “state work periods” or “district work periods” — are windows when members return home and are far more accessible than in Washington.



Bring the conversation to your turf

Showcase what counties do every day, on the ground where it happens.



Connect federal policy to local reality

Turn an abstract bill into a concrete, visible impact.



Build a lasting relationship

One that sustains advocacy all year — not just during a fly-in.

NEW TO THIS?

Already done a D.C. fly-in? This guide is the perfect complement. First-timer? It's often the easiest place to start.

“Recess = Access at home.”

The core idea to carry into today's session.

D.C. Office vs. District Office

	WASHINGTON, D.C. OFFICE	DISTRICT / STATE OFFICE
Focus	Legislation, floor votes, committee hearings	Constituent services, casework, local outreach
Best Time	While Congress is in session	Year-round — especially during recess
Who You'll Meet	Legislative staff & policy aides	District director & often the member
Best For	Structured legislative asks, D.C. fly-ins	Site visits, local storytelling, relationship-building

Focus your recess energy on the district office — it's where members are most reachable and relationship-building happens fastest.

Step 1: Find the Right Office Location

Many members represent large geographic areas with multiple state or district offices. Identify the office closest to your county.

1

Look up your delegation

Use NACo's Grassroots webpage to find your representative or senator.



2

Visit their official website

Navigate to their site to see all in-district office locations.

Choosing Your Format

Use a mix of meeting types with each office over time to bolster engagement.



1. Start: In-Office Meeting

Establish the relationship and make your formal ask.



2. Follow-Up: Site Visit

Invite them back during a later recess to see it in action.

ALTERNATIVE

If you have a compelling project ready now, lead with the site visit — and use the visit itself as the setting for a more formal ask.

Step 2: Site Visit vs. In-Office Meeting



Site Visit

- ✓ Physically shows programs in action
- ✓ Creates memorable, visual context
- ✓ Lets residents & staff speak to impact directly
- ✓ Photo & social opportunities

BEST FOR

Roads/bridges, disaster sites, health & human services facilities, broadband, housing, libraries, airports, public lands



In-Office Meeting

- ✓ Efficient for multiple issues in one sitting
- ✓ Easier to schedule on short notice
- ✓ Room for data, briefs & printed materials
- ✓ Works well when meeting with staff

BEST FOR

Legislative asks, bill co-sponsorship, funding requests without a visible site, follow-ups & introductory meetings

03 • PLANNING YOUR MEETING

Step 3: Send a Clear, Concise Request

Three short paragraphs. Who you are, what you want to discuss, and when you're available.



Your name, title & county



Population / district context



1–2 specific issues to discuss



Meeting format (office or site visit)



2–3 date/time options

TEMPLATE: MEETING REQUEST EMAIL

Subject: Meeting Request – [Title, Name, County]

Dear [District Staffer's Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I serve as [Title] for [County], home to [population] residents. I'm writing to request a meeting with [Member] while they are in-district for the upcoming work period.

I'd welcome the chance to discuss [one or two specific issues]. [Optional: invite them to visit a specific project.]

I'm available [dates/times]. I can be reached at [phone/email].

Sincerely,
[Your Name], [Title], [County]

Step 4: Scheduling Best Practices



Keep it to 30 minutes for meetings, 45 for site visits

Enough time for your message and conversation — respectful of a busy schedule.



Be flexible on participants

If the member can't meet, a district staffer is a strong second — better than no meeting.



Follow up

No response in a week? A follow-up call or email is entirely appropriate.



Coordinate with NACo

Government Affairs staff can help identify contacts, flag priorities, and suggest data & materials.

Before the Meeting or Site Visit



Define your ask

One to two specific, actionable requests — co-sponsor, support funding, oppose a change.



Research their priorities

Review committee assignments & recent statements; frame your issue around genuine overlap.



Prepare a one-pager

Population, budget, key services, and a data point on your issue. County Explorer helps.



Prepare your local story

Numbers open doors; stories close deals. Have one concrete, real example ready.



Brief your team

Who leads, who covers talking points, who takes notes.



Connect with NACo Government Affairs

We share national positions, policy context, and help think through talking points.

If You're Hosting a Site Visit



Choose the right location — tells a story quickly and visually



Keep the agenda tight — 30–45 minutes is ideal



Let the site tell its own story — show, don't tell



Involve county staff or residents — firsthand impact persuades



Consider a media & social media plan — get sign-off from your MOC's office before posting or sharing with a news organization



Have materials ready to hand off at the end



IDEAL SITES

- A bridge in need of repair
- An emergency communications center
- A housing development
- A new community center
- A county-owned hospital
- A county jail

If You're Attending an In-Office Meeting



Arrive early, leave on time

5–10 minutes early. If running over, offer to wrap up gracefully — it builds goodwill.



Open with who you are

A clear intro — name, role, county, and what you plan to discuss.



Be conversational, not presentational

Speak like a knowledgeable colleague. Bring notes as reference, not a script.



Listen actively

Engage with concerns directly. Offer to follow up with info you don't have on hand.

Reminder: staff meetings matter just as much — staff report back to the member and shape their recommendations.

Day-Of Checklist



Confirm meeting time, location & attendee list the morning of (or day before)



Bring printed one-pagers and county data



Bring business cards for all attendees



Bring something to take notes



Know your primary ask in one sentence



Plan to send a thank-you and follow-up within 24 hours

Plan Your Meeting: Key 2026 Recess Windows

The 119th Congress, 2nd Session runs through the end of 2026. Two windows matter most for in-district advocacy:



Summer Recess

AUGUST

The longest stretch of the year — members are home for over a month.
Ideal for site visits, meetings and community events.

Exact dates vary by chamber.



Election Recess

OCTOBER

Members are in campaign mode, but constituent engagement is high.
Connecting county priorities to local voter concerns can be especially effective.

Exact dates vary by chamber.

Note: schedules are subject to change based on legislative activity, and members may have personal or official travel during recess. Always confirm availability directly.

A Meeting Is a Starting Point, Not a Finish Line

Send a thank-you within 24–48 hours: restate your ask, include follow-up materials, and leave the door open.



Share updates

New project, funding decision, or bill movement — a brief note keeps staff informed.



Keep the ask alive

Check in every few weeks during active legislative periods — outcomes come from sustained engagement.



Extend invitations

Board meetings, ribbon cuttings, emergency drills — each visit builds the relationship.



Leverage social media

Tag the member (with permission) when your county achieves a shared policy win.



Celebrate wins

If they vote for a priority or fund a project — thank them publicly. It reinforces the relationship.



Report back to NACo

Tell us how it went, what you heard, and any commitments made — we'll reinforce it in D.C.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Show Up. Schedule It. Keep in Touch.

1

Recess is your best window — members are more accessible at home than in D.C.

2

Lead with a clear, specific ask — vague requests don't move people to action.

3

Match the format to your goal — site visit to show, office meeting to discuss.

4

The relationship outlasts the meeting — consistent follow-up is what wins outcomes.

Your next step: identify your recess-window meeting target this week.

Take the Toolkit Home With You



FULL TOOLKIT

***“Congress in Your Community: A
County Official's Guide to In-
District Engagement”***



RELATED RESOURCES

- D.C. companion guide: From Counties to Congress — Your Guide to Federal Policy Advocacy in Washington
- County Grassroots Advocacy Hub
- County Explorer — data for your one-pager



CONTACT NACo GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

We help identify contacts, flag priority recess opportunities, and prep your talking points.

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Questions? Let's discuss.