

ACC-OC 2023 FEDERAL ISSUE BRIEFS AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



HOUSING AND LAND USE

Overview: Orange County and its 34 cities are home to 3.16 million people and 1.6 million jobs. Housing is a top priority in Orange County where the median home price is \$1.26 million and the demand for housing has outpaced supply. Cities and local officials know the needs of their communities best. To effectively address housing challenges, maintaining local land use authority and control is essential, while working with the private sector and the federal government on housing solutions. Although Orange County is more built out than other regions of Southern California, there are opportunities to create new options for affordable housing, renting, and homeownership in a way that complements our local communities' character and goals.

Recommendations:

- Increased collaboration between cities and the U.S. Housing & Urban Development Department to support cities and protect local control while achieving housing goals.
- Include robust funding for the following housing programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) in the FY24 Appropriations package and create new tools to confront the housing crisis. In addition, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit should be expanded.
- Support legislation to increase the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) percentage to help finance construction and preservation of affordable homes nationwide.
- Support direct funding for local governments to accelerate housing development including CDBG, HOME, and the Housing Trust Fund.
- Support housing stability programs for residents in distress including Housing Choice Vouchers, Emergency Solutions Grants Program, Rural Housing Programs, and enact the Eviction Crisis Act.
- Make cities and towns of all sizes eligible for capacity building, technical assistance, and pre-development programs like the Thriving Communities initiative and the "Yes In My Backyard" competitive grant program.
- Support grants and tax-credits for affordable and public housing improvements including cost-saving energy efficiency improvements and expanded access to broadband.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Overview: Public safety is an essential role of local government. Orange County cities work in partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, municipal law enforcement and fire departments, as well as emergency services and local hospitals to ensure the health and welfare of our residents and communities. ACC-OC urges the Biden Administration and Congress to fund and authorize community-based programs to serve mental health and homelessness programs affecting cities nationally. Law enforcement should not be the sole representative of government these individuals rely on for services. ACC-OC urges increased funding and opposes federal regulatory actions and/or legislation that impacts local government eligibility for disaster response and recovery programs. ACC-OC urges comprehensive federal action to respond and address the national Fentanyl crisis.

Recommendations:

- Increased funding for law enforcement training costs related to homelessness and mental health.
- Support the Fentanyl Prevention Caucus. Fentanyl is a national crisis. In California, there were 239 fentanyl-related deaths in 2016. By 2021 this number increased by 2,294% to 5,722 deaths. In that same period Orange County fentanyl deaths increased from 37 to 716.
- Oppose legislation that impacts eligibility for disaster response and recovery assistance.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview: Cities are drivers of economic development in their communities, everything from implementing major capital improvement and infrastructure projects, to attracting and retaining business ventures, to providing critical public services. Cities constantly navigate the challenge of growing their economies while complying with state and federal mandates, many of which are unfunded. The development of our future workforce is also just as crucial to Orange County's economic vitality.

Recommendations:

- Orange County advocates for its fair share of Federal funding based on population, urban nature, and the amount of tax revenue contributed to Federal budgets.
- Encourage the federal government to help create opportunities for public-private partnerships that facilitate private sector investment, rather than governmental taxes and spending, to accomplish public benefits.
- Support funding for the RECOMPETE Pilot Program, which will provide funding to persistently distressed communities to develop and implement 10-year economic development strategies and create jobs.
- Support and invest in sector partnerships to connect local workers to careers in local industries that have significant hiring needs and expected growth.
- Support investments in direct workforce funding, including the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and National Apprenticeship Act.
- Maintain stability of government operations to minimize disruptions in local governance by preserving local funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act.



TRANSPORTATION

Overview: Seamless mobility is essential to the quality of life of Orange County cities. Effective transportation networks reduce congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and provide essential connectivity for residents and workers. Orange County is a self-help county with a dedicated half cent sales tax committed to funding vital transportation systems. Our cities work in partnership with our transportation agencies, as well as federal agencies to fund multi-modal transportation programs and projects.

Recommendations:

- Ensure Orange County receives its fair share of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds.
- Maximize federal transportation funding programs that are formula-based to ensure predictability and to quickly obligate them to ready-to-go projects.
- Ensure implementation of Build America, Buy America requirements, specifically those related to construction materials, are done in a feasible manner to ensure that materials are adequately available for purchase within the United States.
- Seek funding opportunities, and coordination with federal partners, including the Federal Rail Administration, on impacts to intercity rail from coastal erosion.
- Maintain flexibility for regions to direct federal funds to priority projects.
- Support Federal Highway Administration Guidance on use of Highway funding.



HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH

Overview: Homelessness is a growing crisis across California and impacts cities of all sizes, geographic locations, and socioeconomic levels, including Orange County. Homelessness is both a housing and mental health challenge. Local governments are on the front line of addressing homelessness, and support from the federal government is critical to solutions. There is also a growing mental health challenge prevalent among students as impacts from COVID-19 are still being realized.

Recommendations

- Efforts to develop sustainable and ongoing funding sources for the creation of permanent supportive housing and affordable housing in local communities, including tax increment tools.
- Increased federal appropriations for key housing and homeless assistance grant programs and legislative initiatives that authorize funding for comprehensive services and care coordination, including housing stabilization services funding paired with housing subsidies.
- Increased funding for federal programs, including but not limited to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Community Development Block Grant Program, and Emergency Solutions Grants; and advocate for increased resources to meet the increasing demand for disability compensation, health care related claims, and the housing needs of its growing veteran population.
- Sufficient resources and flexibility to implement federal initiatives, as well as advance federal, state, and local partnerships to provide evidence-based treatment to justice involved youth and adults with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Funding and federal support for innovative solutions to mental health services (e.g. Be Well behavioral health campuses).



UTILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY

Overview: To sustain Orange County's dynamic economy and quality of life, a strong infrastructure network to support the efficient movement of goods, services, people, and information is critical, as are the resources and reliability needed to sustain that activity. Orange County has historically made significant investments in its energy, telecommunications, environmental, transportation, and water infrastructure, but continued support from the federal government to maintain these investments is crucial. Cities are at the intersection of local, regional, state, and federal infrastructure networks and play a critical role in ensuring the right systems are in place to best serve their communities.

Recommendations:

- Support continued rollout of broadband infrastructure, access, and affordability programs and federal funding (e.g. Affordable Connectivity Program).
- As nationwide goals for renewable energy advance, cities need adequate support from the state and federal government and public/private utilities to ensure reliability and affordability.
- Support reauthorization and full annual funding of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.
- Implementation of federal Infrastructure Legislation that provides for equitable distribution of funds, maintaining or increasing funding levels for critical programs, prioritizes local discretion in programming and allocation decisions, and rewards regions with local revenue matching abilities.
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act provided significant investments for addressing climate change, supporting clean energy and making communities more resilient in the face of extreme weather events and natural disasters. ACC-OC will continue to advocate for policies and programs that support local climate action and a federal partner to address this critical issue.
- Since 1998, the federal government has failed to meet its statutory and contractual obligations to begin removing spent nuclear fuel from the San Onofre Nuclear Station, despite the fact that nationwide ratepayers have already pre-paid \$46 billion dollars (including interest) to the Nuclear Waste Fund to pay for the development of a permanent repository, including \$2 billion from California customers. Taxpayers also continue to pay \$2 million a day (\$9 billion since 2000) to compensate utilities for continuing to store 86,000 metric tons of spent fuel on site at 76 operating or shutdown nuclear power plants in 34 states. The problem will only continue to grow in coming years, surpassing the 100,000 metric ton mark by 2030 and an anticipated 140,179 metric tons of spent fuel accumulated during the remaining lifetime of existing nuclear power plants across the country.
 - To address this problem, Orange County, San Diego County and SONGS co-owners (Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas & Electric and the City of Riverside) have formed the Spent Fuel Solutions. ACCOC is among the 250+ organizations and community leaders members of the coalition. In addition to working with the Department of Energy on its consent-based storage initiative, the coalition and national experts are collaborating on recommended changes to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act to support the interim and permanent storage of the spent fuel at SONGS and other facilities across the nation. ACC-OC is supporting the bipartisan Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus, which is also looking to prioritize this issue in the House of Representatives.



WATER SOLUTIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

Overview: Orange County is a desirable place to live, work, and play in large part because of its ideal climate and pristine coastal environment. Supporting Orange County's population and economy requires a reliable and sustainable source of water and natural resources. At the same time, overly burdensome environmental regulations often result in unfunded mandates that make compliance difficult for many cities.

Recommendations:

- Securing Orange County's fair share of approved and proposed federal water infrastructure funding.
- State and federal cooperation, funding and policy adoption to ensure balanced implementation of a modernized Delta Conveyance to achieve the co-equal goals of Delta ecosystem restoration and improved water supply reliability.
- Federal funding for the development of local and regional projects that will improve water reliability through transfers, desalination, water use efficiency, storage and water recycling.
- A sustainable solution preserve and protect the Colorado River water supply resource.
- Support the long-term reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Cooperation from the federal government to ensure environmental regulations do not impose unnecessary burdens or unintended consequences on local governments or communities.