

TO: City Council

FROM: Al Adam, Mayor
David Newman, Mayor Pro Tem
Bob Engler, Councilmember
Kevin McNamee, Councilmember

DATE: March 26, 2024

SUBJECT: Annual Federal Meetings and 2024 National League of Cities
Congressional City Conference

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive report.
2. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

No Additional Funding Requested. Direct and indirect costs for City Councilmembers to attend the conference are included in the Adopted FY 2023-24 General Fund Budget.

BACKGROUND:

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal governments throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, the NLC serves as a resource and advocate for the more than 2,750 cities, villages, and towns it represents.

While at the NLC Congressional Cities Conference, City delegates conduct meetings on Capitol Hill as part of the City's continuing efforts to obtain federal support for local needs and priorities. Such meetings with federal officials have been successful in yielding financial support for various projects including (a) the widening of the S.R. 23 Freeway; (b) building the City's LEED Certified Transit Center; and (c) "seed money" toward the widening of the U.S. 101/S.R. 23 Interchange.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Meetings On Capitol Hill - March 7-8, 2024

Meetings with Congressional members and agency staff were attended by Mayor Adam; Mayor Pro Tem Newman; Councilmember Engler; and Legislative Affairs Manager Layba, as well as federal lobbyist James Crum from Van Scoyoc Associates. According to the Brown Act and rules governing quorum, only two Council members attended each meeting as noted below.

City delegates attended several meetings with Congressional officials before the start of the NLC Conference to discuss Thousand Oaks 2024 project interests and local issues.

A. Meetings with Congressional Members

- 1. Sen. Alex Padilla's Office – Josh Esquivel, Legislative Director: (Mayor Adam and Mayor Pro Tem Newman)*
- 2. Sen. Laphonza Butler's Office – Daniel Leonardini, Policy Advisor: (Mayor Adam and Mayor Pro Tem Newman)*
- 3. Congresswoman Julia Brownley and Sharon Wagener, Legislative Director (Mayor Adam and Mayor Pro Tem Newman)*
- 4. Congressman Salud Carbajal – Johanna Montiel, Legislative Director (Mayor Adam and Councilmember Bob Engler)*

City delegates discussed FY 2024-25 Congressionally Directed Spending project interests (Attachment #1):

- Advanced Water Metering Program
- Community Resilience Center Microgrid
- Dial-A-Ride Paratransit Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Conversion
- Accessibility Study on Open Space Trails

Delegates also informed congressional offices of meetings planned with federal agencies seeking grants or resources regarding:

- Avenida de los Arboles Safe Streets Planning Study
- Wildlife Access Improvements Along U.S. 101/S.R. 23
- Section 219 Authority with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

City delegates also thanked Congresswoman Brownley and the Offices of Congressman Carbajal, Senator Butler, and Senator Padilla for their support in the U.S. Department of Transportation Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant.

B. Meetings with Congress Members for Specific Issues

*1. Congressman Adam Schiff's Office – Danielle Fulfs, Legislative Director:
(Mayor Adam and Mayor Pro Tem Newman)*

City delegates met with the Congressman's office to inquire about the status of the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act (H.R. 2387) and share the City's interests in developing accessibility trails and enhancements for wildlife accessibility along freeway corridors. During the meeting, Congressman Schiff stopped in to say hello and thank the City for its support of the Rim of the Valley legislation.

C. Meetings with Federal Agencies

*1. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Susan Lucas, Regional Team Leader
(Mayor Adam and Councilmember Engler)*

City delegates provided an update on the outcome of the South Branch Flood Plain Project and the City's interest in seeking federal funding through the Section 219 program to address local drainage issues.

*2. Department of Transportation – Elena Joa, Congressional Affairs Specialist
(Mayor Adam and Councilmember Engler)*

City delegates discussed three projects where the City is seeking federal support: Conversion of Dial-A-Ride paratransit to zero-emission vehicles; planning study through the Safe Streets Grant for Avenida de Los Arboles; and accessibility study on Open Space trails.

NLC Annual Congressional Cities Conference – March 9-13, 2024

The NLC annual Congressional Cities Conference was held on March 9-13, 2024, at the Marriott Marquis and Convention Center in Washington, D.C. City officials gather for leadership meetings, policy discussions, and legislative briefings to learn about current federal issues and priorities for America's cities and towns. Mayor Pro Tem Newman, Councilmembers Engler and McNamee; and Legislative Affairs Manager Layba represented the City.

Pre-Conference Meetings:

A. Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy Committee (PSPS) Meeting
(Councilmember Engler is appointed to the PSPS Committee)

1. Mental Health Crisis Response and Enhancing 9-1-1 Protocols and Community Resources: PSPS Committee discussed strategies on how to enhance federal support for training programs, funding for mental health crisis intervention teams, and the integration of mental health professionals into emergency response protocols. Additionally, the Committee explored ways local governments can enhance 9-1-1 call response.
2. Local Public Safety Programs and Advanced Technology and Tools Including Integrated Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCC): PSPS Committee discussed the benefits of RTCCs in crime prevention and response, the challenges of implementing advanced technologies in public safety operations, and the importance of federal-local partnerships in ensuring the successful adoption and integration of these tools.
3. Kirby Gaherty, Program Director, Justice Initiatives for NLC facilitated a discussion with representatives from Brooklyn, NY, and Philadelphia, PA on how their cities recruit and retain public safety workforce. Both agencies have experienced chronic shortages. The use of federal grants and the recalibration of physical requirements and written testing have been used to bring in more recruits.
4. Yucel Ors, NLC Public Safety Policy Director, provided a 2024 federal policy update: Congress has until March 22 to pass the remaining federal FY 24 appropriations bills. Of the six bills, funding for the Department of Homeland Security is still being negotiated. Top legislative issues affecting the PSPS portfolio include:
 - Rail Safety Bill
 - SAFE Grants
 - FIRE Grants
5. Announcements: The next PSPS meeting will be scheduled at the NLC Summer Leadership Meeting, June 11-13, 2024, in Rancho Cordova, CA

B. Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (EENR) Policy Committee Meeting (Mayor Pro Tem Newman and Legislative Affairs Manager Layba are appointed to the EENR Committee)

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1. Supporting Capacity and Movement Building in Communities: Peyton Siler Jones, Interim Director of NLC's Sustainability and Innovation Programs, shared the work NLC is doing to advance the SolSmart program with streamlined permitting and zoning, new Wind Wise program for wind energy capture; Smart Surfaces Coalition to support building energy efficient buildings with innovation such as cool roofs and porous surfaces. She also shared that Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Environmental Justice Technical Assistance helps underserved and communities with grants and training. The Sustainability and Innovations team is also working on webinars, social media, and technical assistance to support cities with their programs.
2. Legislative Update – EENR Policy Director Carolyn Berndt: Congress has 42 members and eight senators who will not seek re-election in 2024. Congress has an FY 24 appropriation package of six bills that still need to be approved by March 22 to keep certain departments funded until September 30, 2024. Currently, there is no agreement. The top legislative issues affecting the EENR portfolio are:
 - Rulemaking on Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) in drinking water and getting it out of the environment.
 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program reauthorization.
 - 1-year extension on Farm Bill
 - Brownfield reauthorization
 - Water Resources Development Act
 - Recycling and solid waste- producer responsibility
 - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership- fully fund
 - Permitting reform
 - New EPA regulations
3. PFAS – EPA Rulemaking – Shawn McGuinness, Partner with Coefficient, reviewed municipal liability protection regarding PFAS and the upcoming EPA Rulemaking. Passive receivers such as cities and water utilities could be liable for clean-up. EPA recognizes the protection of liabilities but has limitations from 3rd parties. There is a need for liability protection under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Congress needs to intervene. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is developing legislation and will have a hearing on March 20. NLC is urging cities to send letters by March 18.
4. Financing Clean Energy Projects – Mary Burke Baker and Mike Evans of KNL Gates discussed the tax credits available for cities under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA will provide direct payment from the Department of Treasurer/Internal Revenue Service in the form of energy tax

credits. Cities can qualify for energy credits for clean energy projects such as electric vehicle fueling stations, fuel cell vehicles, clean vehicles, and sustainable projects for ten years, beginning December 31, 2022. There is no limit on number of credits earned.

5. Safe Harbor Provisions – Brent Fewell Esq., Earth and Water Law, shared safe harbor provisions for water. There is a dire need for a water finance exchange to assist with aging and failing water and wastewater systems. There are currently 52,000 systems that do not have enough funding to upgrade and rehab their systems. EPA regulations are impacting these systems/ cities. Safe Drinking Water Act penalties average \$37,500 per day. There is a national initiative for consolidating disparate communities to create a sustainable path forward. Solutions to expand safe harbor provisions for both public and private and most importantly distressed communities are gaining traction.
6. Announcements: The next EENR meeting will be scheduled at the NLC Summer Leadership Meeting, June 11-13, 2024, in Rancho Cordova, CA.

Conference Program:

A. Keynote Speakers

1. NLC Board President, David Sander, Mayor Rancho Cordova, CA: President Sander welcomed the over 3,000 attendees to the annual Congressional Cities Conference. In honor of its centennial celebration, President Sander shared the vision and purpose of how NLC began. Cities must lead by service, purpose, and responsibility. Cities need to focus on local issues, not national politics. City leaders need to be non-partisan and elevate this type of problem-solving on the national level. NLC has established a Presidential Task Force to work with candidates in addressing local needs.

In supporting the celebratory theme, “Bigger and Brighter Visions to Build Our Cities,” NLC is working on new programs. With the support of Google, NLC has developed an Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee. NLC is also strengthening the NLC University by engaging in more research, publishing dashboards, and integrating cyber analysts on local issues. President Sander announced two special programs of his own. This year there will be a special *Spotlight on those under 40*; and a *Youth Create Challenge*. Cities are encouraged to engage their youth in creative submissions on how they envision cities in 100 years. Submissions can be poetry, a short story, art rendering, video, etc. All submissions will be judged, and awards will be given during City Summit.

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2. Clarence Anthony, NLC Executive Director: In honor of the centennial, Executive Director Anthony and NLC Board of Directors conducted a visit to the birthplace of NLC, Lawrence, Kansas, on the campus of the University of Kansas. During their visit, they examined the establishing documents and artifacts. He shared the achievements of NLC since 1924.
 - 1963 – NLC helped with the establishment of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help support housing and desegregation.
 - 1970s – Supported the passage of the Tioga River Act.
 - 1995 – Supported the passage of the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act.
 - 2001 – Instrumental in the creation of the 9/11 task force for Homeland Security Action Plan and lobbied resulting in creation of the Department of Homeland Security.
 - 2008 – Federal Recovery Bill. Lobbied for the passage of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, providing \$200B to state and local governments.
 - 2020 during the pandemic – cities could not shut down. NLC launched Cities Are Essential campaign- passed the Coronavirus Aid and Relief and Economic Security Act or CARES; the \$2B American Rescue Plan.
 - 2021 – Supported the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act's passage leading to \$108B in infrastructure investments and the creation of NLC's Infrastructure Hub Program.
3. Doris Kearns Goodwin – Presidential Historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning Author: The historian shared her experience as an intern for President Lyndon B. Johnson and how her career evolved to write biographies for Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, and the Kennedys. She shared her insights on what makes for a good president through historical contexts including slavery, civil rights, and current times.
4. President Joseph R. Biden – President Biden shared his appreciation for local government, where he and several members of his cabinet got their start in public office. He is pleased to continue his partnership with cities through the pandemic recovery to infrastructure funding. He shared the investments made in Internet access, clean water, and climate change. He announced inflation is down, there are 15 million new jobs and higher wages. He will also be announcing a \$400 tax cut for two years to help new homebuyers save for a downpayment. He will also be introducing a Housing innovation fund to help build more affordable housing. The President also shared he is working with a bipartisan group to address concerns with the border by adding more border control agents, judges, and high-tech drug detection machines into operation.

5. Secretary Tom Perez – Director of White House Intergovernmental Relations reviewed three major investments made to support cities during and after the pandemic. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provided critical funding to cities and states so that they maintain essential services necessary to residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The White House invested funds in strengthening mental health programs, including the 988 suicide and crisis line. The Affordable Connectivity Program gave qualifying households discounts toward internet service to increase access.
6. NLC Second Vice President Steve Patterson, Councilmember from Athens, OH facilitated a discussion with Senator Tina Smith (MN), on her participation with the bipartisan Mental Health Caucus. The Caucus believes that mental health should have the same standards as health care. The Caucus is working on advancing 988 suicide and crisis helplines, additional support for veterans, and increased mental health services for grades K-12. Ideally, they would like to see community healthcare centers include mental health services with adult counselors and peer-to-peer counselors.
7. Julie Su, Acting Secretary of Labor: Acting Secretary announced that there are 15 million new jobs and low unemployment for the last two years. The Department of Labor (DOL) is partnering with *Investing in America*, which is modernizing roads and bridges while bringing new jobs online. DOL is also funding apprenticeship programs and expects to reach one million apprenticeships by the end of the year. In addition to jobs, DOL is funding childcare opportunities and mental health services to assist families.
8. First Vice President Sharon Weston-Broome, Mayor, City of Baton Rouge, (LA) hosted a panel discussion on the National Opioid Settlement with Mayor Donald Mason, Zanesville, OH, Mark Hayes Arkansas Municipal League, and Alabama State Attorney General Steve Marshall. Panelists shared the impacts of the opioid crisis in their regions, how the money will be spent, and guidelines for using the settlement.
9. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg – Secretary Buttigieg thanked the NLC for their partnership in supporting the bipartisan infrastructure law. The law delivered millions of dollars to cities to support key infrastructure investments for increased safety, modernization, and economic development. Through a slide presentation, he illustrated several projects that were implemented as a result of federal funding including the I-5 bridge between Oregon and Washington; the St Lawrence Seaway in Green Bay; the on-dock rail capacity in the Port of Long Beach; and the Chicago elevated freight line.

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10. Executive Director Clarence Anthony taped a Citiespeak Podcast discussion with Congressman Don Bacon (NE) and Congressman Salud Carbajal (CA), members of the Problem Solvers Caucus. The Caucus is bipartisan featuring Congressional Members who are veterans. Both members emphasized the importance of working together even from different political parties. Both shared bills that were introduced by the caucus including childcare access for working parents, support to first responders addressing wildfires, and adaptive vehicle use for veterans. *(Of special note, Councilmember Bob Engler was asked by the League of California Cities to serve as one of the official greeters to Congressman Carbajal before the podcast).*
11. Executive Director Clarence Anthony taped a second Citiespeak Podcast discussion with Henry Cisneros, former San Antonio Mayor, NLC Board Member, and Secretary of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Cisneros reflected on the organization's 100th anniversary and his involvement when he was Mayor of San Antonio. NLC is the voice and champion for cities. Many laws and programs have resulted due in part to NLC's advocacy. NLC was vital in helping Cisneros support the needs of his city. He credits his participation in NLC for getting a cabinet position under President Clinton. He is certain NLC's future is bright as it moves into the next century.

D. Breakout Sessions Attended:

1. Water Infrastructure and Environmental Protection in Urban, Rural and Suburban Settings
2. Aligning Workforce Development with Plans for Economic Growth
3. NLC Rail Roundtable
4. Advancing Local Action on Climate Change and Community Resilience
5. Housing and Homelessness: Federal Aid and Promising Practices
6. Federal Transportation Grants and Opportunities for Your Community
7. Financing Local Clean Energy Projects Through Direct Pay
8. Leveraging Technology and Innovation to Build Strong Local Economies
9. Office Hours with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
10. Office Hours with U.S. Department of Justice
11. Hill Day Training Session

E. National League of Cities 2024 Federal Advocacy Agenda

President Sander presented the NLC's 2024 legislative priorities (Attachment #2):

1. **Make Government Work for Small Communities:** Advocate for equal access for small cities and towns so they may be eligible for federal grant assistance at scale so the benefits of federal programs and policies reach all of America's communities.
2. **Support A Local Workforce Pipeline:** Advocate for investments in workforce development, training, and apprenticeship programs to ensure America's communities have the skilled labor to complete these priority projects.
3. **Build Safe and Healthy Communities:** Advocate for policies and programs that support local climate action and a federal partner to address this critical issue.
4. **Prevent Federal Overreach of Local Governments:** Advocate for restoration of local authority over local telecommunication franchises, land use, and full municipal access to federal infrastructure programs. Contest unfunded mandates.
5. **Increase Housing Supply and Stability:** Urge Congress to provide more funding to help local communities address the housing crisis and maintain efforts even after current one-time programs wind down.
6. **Support Local Economic Growth and Opportunity:** Advocate for federal investments that catalyze local economic growth.

F. Special Presentations

1. *Centennial Federal Advocacy Award*
In honor of NLC's 100th anniversary, the original founding members representing state municipal leagues were honored: Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Michigan.
2. *NLC Capstone Award*
The 2023 Capstone Award was presented to the Cities of Rochester, NY, Charlottesville, CA, and Houston, TX for their project to address the impacts of historic redlining on economic disparities and health. Their project was sponsored by City Health Dashboard.

3. *NLC Infrastructure Hub Grant Recipients*

NLC introduced and congratulated select Infrastructure Hub participants' cities that were successful in receiving grants. Representatives from the Cities of Mount Rainier, MD, Webster Grove, MO, Clarkstown, GA, and Thousand Oaks, CA were brought on stage and acknowledged. (Mayor Pro Tem Newman and Legislative Affairs Manager Layba represented the City).

4. *City Summit 2024, Tampa Bay, FL*

City Summit will be held in Tampa Bay, FL. The summit will be held on November 13-16, 2024, at the Tampa Convention Center. Registration is now open. Mayor Jane Castor of Tampa Bay encouraged delegates to register and presented a video montage welcoming NLC City Summit to her community.

G. NLC Congressional Hill Day

Councilmember Engler and Legislative Affairs Manager Layba participated in Hill Day on March 13 to support NLC priorities and present the 2024 Federal Advocacy Agenda. A special joint briefing was hosted by the League of CA Cities with Senators Butler and Padilla to discuss the interests of the state. A special briefing was also held with House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Sam Graves (MO) with select policy committees. Legislative Affairs Manager Layba who serves on the EENR Policy Committee attended.

COUNCIL GOAL COMPLIANCE:

Meets the following City Council goal:

B. Provide municipal government leadership which is open and responsive to residents, and is characterized by ethical behavior, stability, promoting public trust, transparency, confidence in the future, and cooperative interaction among civic leaders, residents, business representatives, and staff, while recognizing and respecting legitimate differences of opinion on critical issues facing the City.

PREPARED BY: Mina Layba, Legislative Affairs Manager

Attachments:

Attachment #1 – 2024 Federal Funding Interests

Attachment #2 – NLC 2024 Federal Advocacy Agenda Handout