

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Item 15
10-20-15

DATE: October 20, 2015
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Dee F. Bruemmer, County Administrator
RE: Approval of the Urban County Coalition Legislative Priority Issues

Supervisors Earnhardt and Hancock represent the Board when meeting with the other four counties in the Urban County Coalition. Since the end of last session the group has met to develop next year's list of issues for the 2016 session in Des Moines. There are five broad issues being recommended and a reminder about continuing the property tax backfill.

Attached is the priority list with the issues. The second page titled "Additional Issues" lists areas that if they are introduced in session our lobbyist would have direction on the Coalition's recommendation regarding those issues. Each county is seeking approval over the next two weeks on the priorities.

In addition to this list, I will be asking Departments for issues that they would like to discuss with our local legislators and from those submittals will develop a Scott County list with your approval which will be used when we meet locally with our delegation. That first meeting is normally held in the first two weeks of December.



Black Hawk, Dubuque, Johnson, Linn and Scott

Urban County Coalition 2016 Legislative Issues and Priorities

Commercial Property Tax Backfill - The state made a commitment to backfill the revenue loss that was a result of the reduction in the commercial and industrial property tax rates. In addition, the changes in the multi residential rates will take effect in FY17 (and is not backfilled) which will have an additional adverse effect on local revenues. We encourage the State to make sure it continues to follow through on its promise to backfill the property tax loss.

Mental Health Funding - The State made the decision to no longer provide resources to fund the redesigned mental health delivery system. Now levy disparity within regions is causing smaller counties to shoulder a disproportionate share of the financial burden of the current system. Unless the State allows regions to equalize the funding within their respective regions, beginning in FY 17, the regional system will begin to collapse.

In particular, we request:

That the Legislature retains the levy cap on the mental health levy but eliminate the frozen dollar cap and allow individual counties and regions to equalize their levies. This change would eliminate the disparity in the levies that currently exist between counties.

Emergency Management Agency Funding – The current funding formula does not adequately address the needs of the urban counties in Iowa. Eliminate the funding cap on urban counties. We also encourage the State to pass through 80% of the federal funding it receives to counties.

Funding for Local PSAP - The State should send a greater portion (80%) of the wireless surcharge funding to the local Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) and allow the use of these funds for the purchase of equipment. We supported the language in HF 610 that would have moved toward both of these goals but were vetoed by the governor. Additionally, PSAPs should have access to unused parts of the ICN and be allowed to run new cables through existing infrastructure when feasible.

Restore Funding for De-categorization Program - De-categorization is an initiative designed to redirect child welfare and juvenile justice funding to services that are preventive, family-centered and community-based in order to reduce institutional and out-of-home placements. Every county in Iowa is served by one of the 40 established DCAT Boards.

Funding for the DCAT Boards is appropriated via 1.) Legislative allocation 2.) Transfer of Child Welfare funds from the DHS Service Area Manager 3.) Transfer of funds from the Chief Juvenile Court Officer. This year the DCAT Boards did not receive the roughly \$5 million annual allocation distributed by the DHS Service Area Managers. This has resulted in a nearly 80% decrease in funding for many DCAT programs.

DCAT Boards award contracts to local providers for the provision of services that may include; in-home family support, crisis care, parenting groups, Family Treatment Court Services, counseling services, youth development and out-of-school time enrichment programming for at-risk children and families. These programs provide critical prevention services that help reduce the number of children and families involved in the child welfare, Medicaid and juvenile justice system. Without DCAT funding many of these programs will be eliminated.

The Urban County Coalition urges the Legislature to restore the legislative allocation to DCAT Boards so that these critical services are not discontinued.

Delinquent Court Fines - We oppose the last minute addition to the standings bill a provision that will significantly hamper counties abilities to collect overdue court and criminal fines. This new policy will substantially hand these efforts to a third party vendor. All of the UCC members have successful collection efforts and this provision will cost our five counties alone more than 2.5 million dollars. Additionally, the counties that are currently collecting these fines and fees, make sure that the first priority is victim restitution. It is not clear that this would be a priority for a third party vendor. We would like to see the state allow counties that have a proven successful record of collecting these fines, be allowed to continue.

Unfunded and Underfunded Mandates - We encourage the Legislature to act to reduce the instances of cost shifting identified and eliminate the burdens these place on property tax payers. The two areas that have the largest impact on local property taxes are colocation of state offices (DHS) and courthouse maintenance and security, but there are many others.

- **Housing State Offices at Local Taxpayer Expense** – Currently some counties are forced to house a variety of state agencies (DHS and the Courts, for example) and receive little or no reimbursement from the State. In addition, counties are forced to pay for expenses such as postage and office supplies at local taxpayer’s expense. We request that the State no longer require that counties subsidize the local office expenses of state agencies.
- **Courthouse Security** - Like the housing of state agencies, local taxpayers are bearing the entire burden of upgrading, modifying, or even replacing aging courthouses. There is a court expense added to virtually every criminal or civil action but none of this money goes to pay actual courthouse expenses. We would request that the state allocate a portion of these funds to counties for courthouse maintenance and security.
- **Paper Document Storage** – We would encourage the legislature to pay particular attention to the document storage requirements of the Department of Human Services, and the juvenile court system. We would like the State to support moving the agencies to a paperless document storage program like it has other state agencies.
- **Publishing Costs** – Reduce publishing costs to local governments to publish meeting, and legal notices on-line and require only a summary to be published in local print outlets. Additionally, allow counties to publish in only one newspaper.

Additional Issues

REAP and Trail Funding - We encourage the Legislature and the Governor to fully fund the program at the 20 million dollar level as well as fund the completion of the portion of the American Discovery Trail that runs through Iowa. In addition, we encourage the Governor and the Legislature to place a greater emphasis on all trail infrastructure, including water trails, because we believe this is critical to making our State healthier and more competitive in attracting and retaining the 21st century workforce.

County Bonding - We believe that in matters of public finance, counties should be treated in the same manner as cities. We support the provisions of SF 416, which allowed counties flexibility in bonding for certain projects that the cities currently enjoy. We also ask that the limit be raised to a consistent level with cities, currently five million dollars.

County Zoning Equity - We would request that the legislature grant counties the same authority to enforce zoning regulations that cities currently have. Currently counties have no mechanism to force compliance or collect the cost of cleaning up violations and these costs are born by all county taxpayers.

Suggestions by Counties

1. Establishment of a state renewable energy tax credit to be implemented when the federal government reduces or eliminates their program
2. Monitor the implementation of managed care.

331.424A County mental health and disabilities services fund.

1. For the purposes of this chapter and chapter 426B, unless the context otherwise requires:

a. "Base year expenditures for mental health and disabilities services" means the same as defined in section 331.438, Code Supplement 2011, minus the amount the county received from the property tax relief fund pursuant to section 426B.1, Code 2011, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2008.

b. "County population expenditure target amount" means the product of the statewide per capita expenditure target amount multiplied by a county's general population.

c. "County services fund" means a county mental health and disabilities services fund created pursuant to this section.

d. "Per capita growth amount" means the amount by which the statewide per capita expenditure target amount may grow from one year to the next.

e. "Statewide per capita expenditure target amount" means the dollar amount of a statewide expenditure target per person as established by statute.

2. The county finance committee created in section 333A.2 shall consult with the department of human services and the department of management in adopting rules and prescribing forms for administering the county services funds.

3. County revenues from taxes and other sources designated by a county for mental health and disabilities services shall be credited to the county mental health and disabilities services fund which shall be created by the county. The board shall make appropriations from the fund for payment of services provided under the regional service system management plan approved pursuant to section 331.393. The county may pay for the services in cooperation with other counties by pooling appropriations from the county services fund with appropriations from the county services fund of other counties through the county's regional administrator, or through another arrangement specified in the regional governance agreement entered into by the county under section 331.392.

4. An amount shall be reserved in the county services fund to address cash flow obligations in the next fiscal year. The cash flow amount shall not exceed twenty-five percent of the gross expenditures budgeted from the county services fund for the fiscal year in progress. The cash flow amount for a county's services fund shall be specified in the regional governance agreement entered into by the county under section 331.392.

5. Receipts from the state or federal government for the mental health and disability services administered or paid for by a county shall be credited to the county services fund, including moneys distributed to the county from the department of human services and moneys allocated under chapter 426B.

6. For each fiscal year, the county shall certify a levy for payment of services. ~~For each fiscal year, county revenues from taxes imposed by the county credited to the services fund shall not exceed an amount equal to the amount of base year expenditures for mental health and disability services.~~ A levy certified under this section is not subject to the appeal provisions of section 331.426 or to any other provision in law authorizing a county to exceed, increase, or appeal a property tax levy limit.

7. Appropriations specifically authorized to be made from the mental health and disabilities services fund shall not be made from any other fund of the county.

8. Notwithstanding subsection 6, for the fiscal years beginning ~~July 1, 2013, July 1, 2014, and July 1, 2015~~ **July 1, 2017 and thereafter**, county revenues from taxes levied by the county and credited to the county services fund shall not exceed the ~~lower of the following amounts:~~

~~a. The amount of the county's base year expenditures for mental health and disabilities services.~~

~~b. the amount equal to the product of the statewide per capita expenditure target for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2013, multiplied by the county's general population for the same fiscal year~~ **as designated by the state.**

THE COUNTY AUDITOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFIES
THAT THIS RESOLUTION HAS BEEN FORMALLY
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON

DATE

SCOTT COUNTY AUDITOR

R E S O L U T I O N

SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

October 22, 2015

APPROVAL OF THE URBAN COUNTY COALITION
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY ISSUES

BE IT RESOLVED BY the Scott County Board of Supervisors as follows:

Section 1. That the Urban County Coalition 2016 Legislative Issues and Priorities is hereby approved.

Section 2. This resolution shall take effect immediately.