



2011 Legislative Initiatives

County Budget Security –

State support for local governments has been slashed – down 62% from FY 2007, turning the clock back to 1984 funding levels. The deepest reductions – to local roads and bridges, law enforcement, health departments, and county jails – have already been extended through FY 2012 and beyond. Counties receiving a 95% cut in Highway User Revenue funding have been reeling, with no local revenue sources for transportation needs. These State cuts, coupled with the weak economy, have forced counties to take drastic steps: draw down rainy day and reserve funds, lay off hundreds of employees, eliminate thousands of additional positions, implement furloughs and pay reductions, reduce citizen services and delay projects. Counties have incurred warnings from bond rating agencies and face new long-term challenges resulting from maintenance deferrals and depleted reserve funds.

These difficult times are expected to continue as federal stimulus funds reach their end and property assessments suffer unprecedented declines. A looming shift in pension funding responsibilities could further overwhelm the counties' already desperate budget situations. MACo understands the challenges facing the State's budget, but urges policymakers to avoid further reductions or cost shifts to counties, which could burden county budgets and taxpayers unfairly.

School Construction and Renovation Funding –

While the State has laudably increased its school construction and renovation efforts in recent years, the need for funding remains high. Every state dollar invested in school projects leverages roughly two county dollars of local funding. MACo urges the General Assembly to continue its commitment by keeping school construction and renovation funding a high priority and support a funding level consistent with its own adopted multi-year goals. The State should also move toward a new multi-year funding strategy as the current goal expires in FY 2013. MACo also supports pursuing efficiencies and flexibility in the school construction process that could maximize the use of State and local capital funds.

School Budget Accountability - Maintenance of Effort Waiver Reform –

Last Session, MACo supported reform of the State's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) waiver law after three counties were rejected by the State Board of Education. While the General Assembly adopted some one-time remedies in the 2010 Session and the State Board granted waivers to two counties that requested it, the core issues of the current waiver system remain. Legislation should replace the current waiver system with a clearer and fairer process for evaluating county hardships in waiver requests. MACo will also defend against changes to the MOE system that would be harmful to county budget autonomy.