



Montana Association of Counties

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONTANA'S COUNTIES NEED HELP

Rural Local Governments Left Out of CARES Act

HELENA, MT – Local Government is at the front lines of the COVID-19 response, including our law enforcement, health departments, health officers, county-owned medical facilities, and through our work with local private providers and facilities. Montana's counties are working hard to ensure continuity of operations and service delivery during this nation-wide pandemic while keeping the public as safe as possible. County operations are being modified to comply with protective measures while still providing essential county service delivery and ensuring public access and participation. Montana counties need help.

H.R. 6467, otherwise known as "The CARES Act" provides approximately \$1.25 billion in COVID-19 response funding to Montana. While the intent of the federal legislation was to provide 45% of that funding to front-line local government response costs, the bill only requires that distribution for local governments with a population OVER 500,000 people. With a few exceptions, local governments in the west, including all of Montana's local governments, were left out of direct funding in the CARES Act. Even though the U.S. Treasury will prepare guidance documents on the authorized uses of the funding, the State of Montana ultimately will determine where and how those funds can be used in compliance with that guidance.

MACo applauds Senator Daines for his work in negotiating with Treasury to ensure the funds get to front-line responders in Montana's local cities, towns, and counties. We further applaud his efforts to convince Treasury to consider mitigation as an appropriate use of CARES act funding. Montana property taxpayers fund the bulk of Montana local government, and Montana local government provides the direct front-line response to this pandemic. The financial impact will be borne by Montana workers, businesses, and producers who have property tax bills pending, and we need to find a way to keep local services in place while providing meaningful relief to our property taxpayers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic damage it has and will continue to cause.

"After securing \$1.25 B for Montana in the Coronavirus Economic Relief Package, I've worked with Secretary Mnuchin and Treasury to ensure these funds reach local governments as quickly as possible. Now that the money has been allocated to the State of Montana for faster delivery, I urge Montana Officials to distribute this money as Congress intended with no less than 45% of funds directed to county and municipal governments on the frontlines of this pandemic." – Senator Steve Daines

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