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Contacts: Elena Temple (USCM)
202-286-1100 etemple@usmayors.org

Tom Martin (NLC)
[202-626-3186](tel:202-626-3186) martin@nlc.org

Brian Namey (NACo)
bnamey@naco.org, [202.942.4220](tel:202-942-4220)

Local Government Organizations Thank EPA for Moving Forward on Affordability Framework

Says Positive Step Forward Demonstrates EPA's Willingness to Better Understand Local Government Priorities and Resource Constraints

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Monday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a "Financial Capability Assessment Framework for Municipal Clean Water Act Requirements." This Framework was the result of nearly two years of discussions with representatives of The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo).

The local government organizations asked for these discussions due to the growing concern that costly water and wastewater mandates were dramatically impacting low and fixed income residents.

USCM, NLC and NACo thanked EPA for working collaboratively to outline a new Financial Capability Framework. The groups welcomed it as a good first step in bringing national water quality goals and local resource constraints in better balance.

The Framework "identifies the key elements EPA uses in working with permittees to evaluate how their financial capability should influence schedules...and provides examples of additional information that may help some communities provide a 'more accurate and complete picture' of their financial capability."

USCM CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran said, "We appreciate EPA engaging local governments in this critical discussion of how to meet water and wastewater goals without placing an undue burden on the poor. To be successful, we need to reestablish the federal-local government partnership if we are to move forward on improving public health and the environment but to do so in a cost effective manner."

“The financial capability framework outlines new socio-economic factors that will paint a better picture of what is affordable for residents and communities. We must find a new approach to determining affordability because the current framework has been shown to have disproportionate impact on our most vulnerable populations,” said NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence Anthony.

Implementing the new policy in the field is the next challenge, and the organizations are committed to working with the Agency to accomplish this. Key concerns include EPA’s hesitation to fully embrace consideration of all public water costs to the full extent the three associations had hoped for. Safe Drinking Water Act requirements are an equally essential consideration that must be included in evaluating financial capability. The groups expressed confidence in EPA’s desire to improve this process over time.

NACo Executive Director Matthew Chase said, “This framework illustrates how local governments work with the EPA to achieve clean water goals while addressing water affordability issues within communities. We look forward to continuing to work together to implement this framework successfully across the nation.”

Read the Framework:

http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/npdes/cso/upload/municipal_fca_framework.pdf

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are nearly 1400 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.

The National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo assists America’s 3,069 counties in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient counties. NACo promotes sound public policies, fosters county solutions and innovation, promotes intergovernmental and public-private collaboration and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. More information at: www.naco.org.