



Maine Municipal Association

2012 Federal Issues Paper



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The 2012 Federal Issues Paper is a publication of the Maine Municipal Association. The purpose of the paper is to highlight federal issues that are of concern to Maine municipal officials and to reflect the policy positions adopted by the MMA Executive Committee.

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Introduction

Maine’s municipal leaders have reasons to be encouraged and reasons to be discouraged with respect to their interactions with Washington in recent days. This 2012 *Federal Issues Paper* attempts to provide our Congressional Delegation with feedback on both fronts.

The glimmer of encouragement comes from the new policy direction advanced in the fall of 2011 by the Office of Water within the Environmental Protection Agency. As described in an open memo, this new policy approach speaks to an apparent willingness on the agency’s part to work with the regulated communities to more vigorously integrate and prioritize the mandated infrastructure improvements to allow for a more cost effective approach.

Discussed in more depth below, it remains to be seen how this new policy will actually be implemented. EPA officials are the first to describe it as a work in progress. Simultaneous to all this, the state’s so-called “MS4” communities (“municipal separate storm sewer systems”) are bracing for the 2012 promulgation of the agency’s stormwater rules. A reauthorization of a five year general stormwater permit pursuant to Clean Water Act requirements is scheduled for next year, and the fear is that the new rules could impose significant new mandates on the resource-strapped towns and cities.

The discouragement stems from what appears to be a complete loss of order and predictability with respect to the presentation, review and ultimate adoption of the federal government’s budget.

For Maine’s towns and cities, the most pertinent federal government appropriations are found in a half-dozen programs identified in the following pages. Not that long ago it was possible to easily determine the President’s funding proposal for these various programs, along with Congress’ alternative funding priorities, all laid out for public debate. Today we are lucky to be provided so much as a rough guess about any program’s funding future. All funding has become crisis funding, with moving baselines and intermittent supplements. Everything appears to be permanently up for grabs.

To the small cogs in the machinery of the intergovernmental system, predictability is important. On that point, the environmental issues and the budgeting issues come together. Whether it is a town or city just learning about the newly identified “impaired stream” for which it will have to develop a watershed management plan that passes federal muster, or a local welfare official trying to project the town’s General Assistance budget for the next year given the year-to-year volatility of federal heating assistance, a certain level of predictability from our partners in Augusta and Washington would make it easier to accomplish the job of delivering governmental services to our mutual constituents.



Federal Stormwater Regulations

The perennial issue. Local governments are having trouble funding the wastewater and drinking water capital improvement projects that are required to meet federal regulatory standards. There is not enough capacity in the property tax or utility rate systems to pay for the required programs and infrastructure required by the Clean Water Act and meet all other priority needs as well. Except for a “stimulus” boost, the State Revolving Loan Funds (SRF) for both drinking water and wastewater projects have been essentially flat funded over the last few years. As a result, an unrelieved burden is being placed on the local ratepayer/taxpayer, especially when considering the new wave of stormwater mandates that are raining down on the 30-plus urban and suburban communities in Maine that have to deal with the Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater management requirements. Most of the activity in the SRF program is loan origination rather than a direct federal contribution to cost-share in the extensive programs and expensive infrastructure required by Clean Water Act mandates.

In the past, the federal government has been asked to recognize this dynamic of rigid regulations imposing financial hardship on local governments and work collaboratively with local government when dealing with Clean Water Act mandates. In last year’s *Federal Issues Paper*, there was a request by all the Region 1 municipal associations to have the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hold outreach and educational meetings prior to issuing any draft permits and discuss with municipal officials what the goals are and what approaches are being contemplated to reach those goals. There are a number of reasons municipal and public utility representatives should be allowed to weigh in early during the process for the regulator’s benefit. These local representatives are stewards of their town’s or city’s natural resources, responsible for the prudent expenditure of the public’s money and well-informed about the challenges and priorities in their communities.

It seems that someone in Washington was listening.

New approach? On October 27, 2011, a memo was issued by the administrators of the Office of Water within the EPA that outlined a new approach the agency was willing to adopt with respect to the local government entities it regulates. As a follow-up, the authors of that memo subsequently participated in a conference call with a number of member leagues from the National League of Cities. The purpose of the call was to detail the Agency’s new policy directive regarding the Clean Water Act. This change in approach by EPA focuses more on flexibility, integration and prioritization of environmental mandates with attention given to affordability and locally developed implementation plans that focus on achieving the environmental protection goal most cost effectively.

During the call it became evident that EPA wanted to engage in dialogue with the state and local governments to discover what models can be used to integrate the various obligations under the Clean Water Act (wastewater, stormwater and watershed) so that the most effective implementation can be prioritized. This approach would allow for a better allocation of scarce financial resources. The EPA is the first to admit this new policy direction is a work-in-progress and “listening” sessions in Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and Kansas City were scheduled.

EPA’s new policy direction could lay the foundation for the most positive federal-local relationship in the area of environmental protection in decades. By acknowledging the fiscal constraints under which all levels of government are operating, and by strongly encouraging local government to lay out the most sensible prioritization of infrastructure improvements, unnecessarily expensive regulatory compliance can be avoided.

Closer to Home. The new policy direction could hardly have been advanced at a better time. Not only does there seem to be a new attitude in Washington, Maine’s regulated communities are cautiously optimistic about Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) approach to an upcoming “perfect storm”

of stormwater regulations. As a “delegated” state, Maine’s DEP administers federal stormwater law on behalf of the EPA.

Over 30 of Maine’s largest communities have been bracing for:

- A new promulgation of EPA’s stormwater regulations. As originally advertised, the new rulemaking promised to substantially expand the Phase II stormwater control mandates.
- A statewide “Impervious Cover Total Maximum Daily Load” (ICTMDL) report that identifies 29 (see sidebar) urban impaired streams for which best management practices will need to be implemented and expensive infrastructure installed in order to reduce the impervious cover in the watershed and increase the macro-invertebrate population in these streams.
- And, the renewal of the 5-year MS4 (“municipal separate storm sewer systems”) permit in 2013 that could be impacted by the new stormwater rules and inappropriately linked to the TMDL impaired stream designations.

At this point in time, these towns and cities are focused on the ICTMDL report that DEP has drafted and are providing comments to the Department. After some initial concern about not including the regulated communities in the report’s initial drafting phase, DEP has now held numerous meetings to hear the concerns of the communities, trade associations and private industries that are dealing with stormwater issues. This approach needs to continue if DEP wants to get buy-in from municipalities and public utilities alike.

Our Request. The EPA is encouraging the municipalities to improve communications with their neighbors and the quasi-municipal water and wastewater districts in the region to ensure that the required infrastructure mandates don’t come down on the local level through disconnected “silos” but are, instead, integrated and prioritized throughout the impacted watershed.

We couldn’t agree more. The Maine Municipal Association is requesting that the Congressional Delegation encourage EPA to continue this “new direction” policy and incorporate its principles in the next round of stormwater rules promulgated by the agency.

Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection is scheduled to formally post the list of 29 newly identified “urban impaired streams”, which will trigger Clean Water Act obligations on the 17 communities where those streams are located. Most of those municipalities are “MS4” communities (“Municipally Separated Storm Sewer Systems”) and some are not, the difference being that the non-MS4 communities are not located within a regional population center large enough to trigger full MS4 treatment under Phase II of the National Pollutant Elimination Discharge System (NPEDS). (The number of stream segments identified in this upcoming Impervious Cover Total Maximum Daily Load report represent new stream listings for the purposes of the report, but not necessarily new stream identifications for the affected municipalities because these stream segments may have been previously identified on other “impaired stream” lists assembled pursuant to Section 313 of the Clean Water Act.)

Municipalities Containing Identified Urban Impaired Streams In Draft DEP Posting
 (* = Non MS4 Community)

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Auburn | 1 stream segment |
| Augusta* | 3 stream segments |
| Bangor | 3 stream segments |
| Biddeford | 1 stream segment |
| Brunswick* | 4 stream segments |
| Ellsworth* | 1 stream segment |
| Freeport | 2 stream segments |
| Hampden | 2 stream segments |
| Lewiston | 1 stream segment |
| Lisbon Falls* | 1 stream segment |
| Portland | 3 stream segments |
| Saco | 1 stream segment |
| Sanford* | 1 stream segment |
| Scarborough | 2 stream segments |
| Skowhegan* | 1 stream segment |
| South Portland | 2 stream segments |
| Topsham* | 2 stream segments |
| Westbrook | 1 stream segment |

LIHEAP Funding

The fragmentation of the federal budgeting process is nowhere more evident than in the allocation for federal heating assistance through the LIHEAP program. There was a time when the LIHEAP budget was a line in the federal budget adopted prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year, and that was that. The LIHEAP budget is now more typically developed as a series of appropriations beginning with base funding and then supplemented, more or less significantly, with subsequent appropriations. At the state level, stitching together the LIHEAP budget makes planning very difficult.

LIHEAP allocations. Since 2000, the annual allocation for federal heating assistance benefits in Maine, including both base and supplemental funding, has ranged from a high of \$76.5 million in 2009 to a low of \$22 million in 2002. In the early part of the last decade, the average annual allocation was in the \$28 million range. In mid-decade, the average allocation increased to around \$40 million a year. The most recent three-year period saw a near-60% increase in the annual distribution, to a three year average of \$63.5 million. The generous increases to Maine’s LIHEAP allocation were very welcome and delivered at a crucial time within a very tough economy. Municipal officials are extremely grateful for that increased funding.

The allocation to Maine in 2012 is \$38.5 million, a 31% year-to-year decrease between 2011 and 2012, and an even steeper drop-off with respect to the most recent three-year average.

The budget conundrum. Better than many constituencies that contact you with respect to the heating assistance program, municipal officials understand how difficult it is to scale back historical levels of appropriation upon which so many people rely in an attempt to bring a budget into line. Over the recent past there has been a surge in federal fuel assistance, and the 2012 LIHEAP budget represents something of a return to the pre-surge levels. From a long-term budget sustainability point of view, the dollar amount of the 2012 LIHEAP allocation is not entirely out of line. The problem is the sudden high cost of heating fuel and what the LIHEAP allocation will be able to buy.

For example, it might appear that the infusion of additional LIHEAP dollars over the last several years has had the effect of restoring the purchasing power of the federal heating assistance benefit to levels not seen since the 1999-2002 period. In fact, when the Maine allocation for 2012 is divided by the current cost of #2 heating fuel, the LIHEAP program in Maine for this winter season will purchase the fewest units of heating energy in recent memory, perhaps in the history of the program.

The municipal request is that LIHEAP funding become stabilized and allocated in accordance with some rational relationship to the real-life cost of energy.

| Year | Maine LIHEAP Allocation (Millions) | #2 Heating Fuel Price Per Gallon (January 1) | Purchasable Gallons (Millions) |
|------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2000 | \$31.6 | \$1.08 | 29.2 |
| 2001 | 29.3 | 1.48 | 19.8 |
| 2002 | 22.2 | 1.11 | 20.0 |
| 2003 | 28.8 | 1.35 | 21.3 |
| 2004 | 25.3 | 1.43 | 17.7 |
| 2005 | 30.6 | 1.89 | 16.2 |
| 2006 | 43.7 | 2.32 | 18.8 |
| 2007 | 32.7 | 2.29 | 14.3 |
| 2008 | 45.2 | 3.36 | 13.5 |
| 2009 | 76.5 | 2.29 | 33.4 |
| 2010 | 58.4 | 2.82 | 20.7 |
| 2011 | 55.8 | 3.07 | 18.1 |
| 2012 | 38.5 | 3.56 | 10.8 |

Sources: Maine State Housing Authority, Governor’s Office of Energy Independence and Security, and Maine Municipal Association

The Marketplace Fairness Act

In the 2011 Federal Issues Paper we advocated at some length for Congress' support for H.R. 3179, the Marketplace Equity Act. The Senate's version has been now introduced as S 1832, the Marketplace Fairness Act. This federal legislation would provide an important framework to level the playing field for "Main Street" retailers and to restore the ability to collect sales and use taxes to fund state and local government services.

These bills are an outgrowth of the creation of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement 10 years ago, and both recognize and encourage the ongoing efforts of the participating states to simplify and homogenize the varying sales tax codes around the country and build a system that allows all sales and use taxes to be collected uniformly regardless of the retail environment.

A summary of the arguments supporting the enactment of the Marketplace Fairness Act in any one of its variations include:

- **Fairness and Equity.** The Internet has changed the face of the Earth. The sales and use tax code was written in the 1950s. For systems of taxation to stay fair and equitable, they need to be redesigned to reflect the way the world is changing. The imposition of a sales tax on consumers to support governmental operations should fall equally on all retail establishments. To effectively exempt one or two retail venues (Internet and catalogue) on the basis of the "physical nexus" myth creates an indefensibly uneven playing field. The very concept of physical nexus is passé; the Internet is physically present everywhere.
- **No New Taxes.** This legislation merely allows for the collection of sales and use taxes enacted in this state in 1953. Although it unquestionably would enhance the ability to collect those taxes, it does not change in any respect the duty to pay those taxes as that duty was imposed 60 years ago.
- **Technologically Feasible.** The willingness of some of the nation's largest retail stores on the Internet to participate in this tax collection program is proof of its technological feasibility.
- **Requires Considerable State Efforts.** The Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement is anything but a free ride on the state level. To become a member, each state needs to thoroughly review, reorganize, effectively modernize and simplify its own tax code, which is a task that can easily get bogged down in political overtones. Maine has much more work to accomplish in order to move from advisory to member status. The effort lost some momentum in 2011 when the Legislature first unanimously endorsed moving ahead with simplification but then subsequently killed the effort along party lines. What the divisive partisan issues were are not clear. The advancement of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement, and the request for Congress to formally recognize that effort, is generally supported in a remarkably bipartisan manner, as is indicated by the Senate sponsorship of the Marketplace Fairness Act.

In contrast, the arguments against this legislation are less compelling.

The bills are described as "raising taxes", which they expressly do not. Complaints are also raised about the burden on small businesses, although the bills: (1) include a small business exemption; (2) require the participating states to provide the necessary software to remote sellers to enable instantaneous calculations appropriate to Maine; (3) encourage the use of consolidated providers who appear to be fully capable of actually performing the tax collection and distribution tasks; and (4) in some variations provide retailers with financial support for the administrative services, as a percentage of the taxes collected.

It is even suggested that imposing a requirement on on-line businesses to collect the appropriate use taxes and remit them to the appropriate state could hurt the fledgling or fragile Internet retail industry, but this is plainly no longer a credible argument. Fragility in the retail sector has long since shifted from the Internet to the bricks-and-mortar stores.

The Maine Municipal Association encourages members of the Maine Congressional Delegation to support the Marketplace Fairness Act.

Federal Resources to Help with Special Education Obligations

School Districts Reeling from a Cut in Federal Funding for Special Ed Students. That was the headline in the January 29, 2012 edition of the Bangor Daily News.

To the casual bystander the headline might suggest that the federal government is reducing its funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was designed to provide solid financial support – 40% is the way it reads in statute – for the special education mandate. Local property taxpayers cannot pay for the required services on their own.

Funding for IDEA, however, was not the subject of the newspaper article. It was a story instead on Maine's use, and perhaps overuse, of the Medicaid program to help pay for special education services to low income students in the public school setting. According to the article, there was a precipitous drop in Medicaid reimbursement to the public school systems between FY 2010 and FY 2011, from over \$37 million to just \$7.7 million. In one school district, \$1.3 million in annual Medicaid resources dropped to just \$73,000. For various reasons, the financial floor dropped out from under the public schools in Maine with respect to how they pay for federally mandated services.

It is not a question of whether that precipitous drop in federal financial support will be replaced with property tax dollars. Such a result has already been built into the state's school funding formula for FY 2013. The minimally-required property tax levy to support public education increased from 7.52 mills to 7.69 mills to reflect the value of those special education services no longer paid for with federal dollars.

This article is not advocating a return to the unguided past where non-medical services were "bundled" into the Medicaid bill sent to the federal government, or unqualified educational staff could effectively order and then supply Medicaid reimbursable services. Whether a hospital or a nursing home or a substance abuse center or a public school, the rules governing Medicaid eligibility should be scrupulously followed. It appears that Maine got into this situation over a 20-year period, and blame for our current circumstances falls on all levels of government involved, including the schools for playing, the state for encouraging the play and the federal government for waiting two decades before appropriately auditing its program and providing quality guidance to the schools.

Through all of this, it should not be forgotten that Maine's public schools continue to provide expensive, medically necessary services to many of their special education students, and they should be allowed access to the Medicaid program just like any other legitimate provider. The dramatic 80% reduction in Medicaid reimbursement is likely a pendulum-swinging-too-far phenomenon where the federal audit (or the fear of audit) is having an over-aggressive effect. The appropriate access point for schools and Medicaid will likely settle somewhere in between what it has been in the past and what it is at the moment.

In the meantime, a less circuitous way of providing federal resources to help with this federal educational mandate would be to fund IDEA somewhat closer to the 40% level embedded in federal statute but never provided.

We are told by the Department of Education that IDEA funds for Maine, after a relatively robust period of growth from 2001 to 2005, have flattened at about \$50–\$54 million annually over the last seven years. That level of federal contribution represents just 15% of the total local-state-federal expenditure for Maine's K-12 special education students, or approximately \$100 million less each year than what federal law suggests should be provided by Washington.

The corrections to the use and administration of Medicaid within the public school systems will be painful in their impacts to the state's property taxpayers, and those property tax increases will be immediately felt. For decades, municipal officials have been of the strong belief that the federal government should honor its financial commitment to special education funding. From 2001 through 2005, IDEA allocations in Maine moved the federal share of special education from 10% to 15% of the total, but it has been frozen there ever since.

The use (or overuse) the Medicaid program is not directly related to IDEA funding but it was a response to the breakdown that occurs when one level of government demands a service to be provided and expects another level of government to fund the program. Unfortunately, in these situations it is the property taxpayers who are given the financial task of carrying out the federal mandate.

Federal Transportation Funding – Predictability Needed

Capital Improvements Funding. The decisions Congress makes regarding transportation related funding and policy issues have a direct impact on the ability of states and municipalities to maintain and repair state and local roads.

The biggest source of frustration for the state and local transportation officials responsible for maintaining and improving nearly 23,000 miles of Maine roads has been the federal government's continued practice of periodically extending the transportation budget as a short term fix rather than adopting and implementing a multi-year transportation budget. The current federal transportation funding program, SAFETEA-LU, was signed into law by President Bush on August 10, 2005, and since has been extended eight times. The eighth extension will expire at the end of March 2012.

The chronic lack of information regarding long-term federal funding decisions, in combination with significant restrictions on highway and bridge revenue at both the state and local levels, are forcing tough decisions about Maine's transportation network that are municipally divisive and could be very costly to Maine's taxpayers. For example, this year the Maine Department of Transportation advanced legislation amending the state's statutorily created road and bridge capital improvement schedule. That bill has received a unanimous endorsement from the Legislature's Transportation Committee.

Under current law, the schedule targets 2027 as the year when all the various categories of Maine roadways will have to meet the federally established "reconstructed" standard. That won't happen now. Under the current highway improvement goal, the state would need \$920 million to stay on track to meet the goal during this current biennium, but only \$563 million in state Highway Fund dollars will be available. In the FY 2014-2015 biennium, the Highway Fund "structural gap" under the current "reconstructed" standard is \$454 million. It is expected to be nearly \$500 million in the FY 2016-2017 biennium.

To control these structural gaps, the Maine Legislature will soon enact legislation to recalibrate the road improvement expectation to the lower "fair or better" standard, which takes into account road safety, condition and serviceability. As shown in *Table 1*, this lower standard has the effect of reducing the FY 2012-2013 structural gap in the state's Highway Fund to \$242 million, the FY 2014-2015 gap to \$315 million and the FY 2016-2017 gap to \$331 million.

The process of downgrading road standards is one way to maximize the most equitable use of limited dollars. However, it is a practice that will soon run its course at both the state and local level.

Table I
Transportation Improvement Cost – Structural Gap
(In millions of \$)

| Biennium | Available Revenues | Existing “Reconstruction” Standard Structural Gap | Proposed “Fair or Better” Standard Structural Gap |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 2012-2013 | \$563 | \$358 | \$242 |
| 2014-2015 | \$512 | \$454 | \$315 |
| 2016-2017 | \$519 | \$483 | \$331 |

Source: Maine Department of Transportation. Commissioner David Bernhardt’s January 31, 2012 testimony in support of LD 1753, *An Act to Improve Transportation in the State*.

State and municipal leaders have a clear responsibility to focus efforts on finding new and sustainable sources of revenue for transportation-related improvements. However, the federal government can play a vital role in assisting state and local efforts by ensuring some level of predictability both in terms of the amount of federal funding received as well as the timing and distribution of the allocated revenue.

In finalizing the next transportation funding bill, municipal and state officials respectfully recommend an approach that: (1) is long-term and provides states with some degree of predictability for project planning purposes; (2) provides states with more flexibility in terms of program administration and the use of formula funds; (3) streamlines regulations so that project delivery can be accelerated; and (4) establishes a reliable and sustainable financing mechanism.

As resources allow, municipal officials also urge support for initiatives that allow federal dollars to “pass-through” the state to municipalities for smaller-scale local transportation projects such as improving sidewalk accessibility, preserving abandoned rail corridors and enhancing pedestrian and bicycle paths. Municipal officials believe that the pass-through programs can help to stimulate local economies.

Weight Limit Increase. It is not all about money. Municipal officials greatly appreciate Maine’s Congressional Delegation’s decades of effort that has finally resulted in the permanent expansion of the federal highway weight limit from 80,000 to 100,000 pounds on the entire section of Maine’s section of I-95. Senator Collins’ efforts appeared particularly instrumental in pushing the policy over the goal line.

Municipal officials have long advocated for and supported the efforts of our representatives in Washington to shine a bright and constant light on the importance of that weight limit increase. Although many state and municipal roads have unnecessarily supported the burdens associated with heavier truck traffic, municipal officials appreciate the fact that good legislation can take many biennia to blossom, and they are grateful for this change in federal transportation policy.

HOME Funding, Lead Abatement and CDBG

Three federal programs that provide towns and cities an opportunity, on a competitive grant basis, to create affordable housing, improve Maine's oldest-in-the-nation housing stock for low income citizens, or help finance infrastructure improvements to provide basic governmental services such as clean water and effective sanitation systems are being cut back, either incrementally each year or by leaps and bounds.

CDBG. The housing and public infrastructure program that is most easily accessed by all the towns and cities in the state (and consequently one of the most widely appreciated federal programs among all municipal officials) is the Community Development Block Grant program. The program makes funds directly available to the five "entitlement" cities and the Cumberland County region, as well as a larger Maine grant for the Department of Economic and Community Development to administer to all other participating municipalities. We are told that the larger grant for all the participating non-entitlement municipalities will be approximately \$10.6 million for 2012, representing an 8% reduction from the previous year's core allocation. Although the formulas may differ to some degree, it is likely the allocation for the six entitlement communities is similarly reduced.

Except for the one-time boost through the Recovery Act, it seems as though support for the CDBG program is being chipped away by a few percentage points year after year. It is a discouraging pattern.

HOME. The hit to the HOME program is much more dramatic. The allocation to Maine in 2011 for the HOME program, which provides communities the opportunity to create affordable housing for low-income households, was approximately \$5.7 million. The allocation for 2012 is approximately \$3.5 million, a 40% reduction. It is our understanding that the sharp year-to-year reduction in HOME funding is a result of a very critical exposé of the program in the Washington Post last May, suggesting shoddy programmatic accountability mechanisms, to say the least.

Municipal officials certainly understand a sharp governmental response to serious allegations of poor financial oversight of taxpayer dollars. It is an unfortunate consequence, however, for the unspoiled apples that remain in the barrel.

Lead Abatement. Another, much smaller HUD-administered program has completely dropped out of sight. As a result of Maine's very old housing stock, some of the state's larger communities could make excellent use of a lead abatement program, recent appropriations for which are small amounts by federal standards -- \$127 million. Apparently that appropriation has been all but discontinued, and Maine's application for access to those resources has been flatly denied.

Public Safety Funding

Maine public safety officials are continuously trying to find efficient and effective ways to provide public safety services. Through mutual aid agreements and the sharing of equipment, staff and facilities, municipalities work together to provide services, but they also benefit from several federally-funded public safety grant programs. Two of the more notable programs are the Fire Act Grant and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) hiring program.

Fire Act Grants. Since 2001, municipalities, both urban and rural, have received \$55.6 million in Fire Act grants. The grants have been used to fund nearly 700 equipment purchase/upgrades, vehicle acquisitions and facility upgrades. Fortunately, unlike many of the other federal grant programs that are experiencing severe cuts in funding, the Fire Act Grants program is holding steady. In both FY 2012 and projected FY 2013, \$670 million will be allocated to the program. Municipal officials greatly appreciate Congress's ongoing interest and investment in this program.

Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). Since 1994, Maine local law enforcement agencies have received over \$54 million in COPS grants. The revenues have funded 420 additional police officers and sheriffs' deputies and 55 school resource officers. Nearly \$12 million in the grant awards have been invested in crime-fighting technologies, such as information-sharing systems and improved communications equipment.

Unfortunately, the COPS program is targeted for funding reductions.

According to the budget information posted on the Department of Justice's website, in both FY 2011 and FY 2012, the federal allocation for the COPS hiring program was \$298 million. In FY 2013, however, the allocation is projected to plummet to \$166 million, a 44% decrease in grant funds available to local level law enforcement agencies. Municipal officials are concerned that if this trends holds, the COPS hiring program will be a thing of the past.



Maine Municipal Association

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Maine Municipal Association is to provide professional services to local governments throughout Maine and to advocate their common interests at the state and national levels.

OUR CORE BELIEFS

We believe in:

- Local government as the keystone of democracy.
- Representative and participatory local government.
- The accessibility and accountability of municipal government officials.
- A commitment to honesty, integrity and the highest ethical standards among public officials.
- The vital intergovernmental role of municipal governments in providing basic services essential to public safety and the functioning of our economy.
- The individuality of each local government.
- The value of collaboration as a means of strengthening cities and towns and providing needed services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
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