

Rollout of WV Municipal League 2021 Federal Advocacy Agenda



Presenters:

WVML President Kevin Knowles

Mayor Glenn Elliott

Mayor Tom Joyce

Matt Ward @ S²



Spring
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Overview of Presentation

- 1. Review of key WVML agenda planks:**
 - Appalachian revitalization
 - Build Back Better infrastructure
 - FY2022 appropriations
 - Healthy & resilient communities
 - Incentives for downtown revitalization
 - HUD ANCHOR initiative
- 2. Time for WV City Leaders to Advocate to Congress & Biden Administration**
 - Resolutions, press, social media
 - Letters, calls & visits to Congress
 - Weigh in with Administration
 - Fly-ins or Zoom-ins
- 3. Advocacy tools from WVML**
 - Template resolutions, letters, social media
 - Support in communication with Congress & Executive Branch
 - Organizing fly-ins and zoom-ins



WV Cities Already Making Progress

- * American Rescue Plan Act passed with major **“Fiscal Recovery Fund”** resources for cities, plus \$3 billion for EDA grants, \$10 billion for water/sewer/stormwater, transportation infrastructure
- * **Earmarking** is back, for both FY2022 spending bills and infrastructure package
- * White House Interagency **Task Force on Coal Communities** moving, and agencies reaching out to conduct projects in WV cities



Review of WVML Federal Advocacy Agenda

WEST VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE 2021 FEDERAL ADVOCACY AGENDA – REBUILDING WEST VIRGINIA'S CITIES



West Virginia cities are the building blocks of good government, and centers of commerce, culture and education in the Mountain State. The West Virginia Municipal League and its 230 member cities, towns and villages will be active in advocacy to the U.S. Congress, the White House, federal agencies, and key stakeholders on important federal legislation, regulation, policy and resource issues in 2021. Rebuilding West Virginia cities from the impacts of COVID-19 and other challenges must be a top federal priority in the Biden/Harris Administration and 117th Congress. We call for robust national investment and innovative, non-partisan and common sense solutions in Washington DC in 2021, including:

1.) **Solid Funding for Key Domestic Appropriations that Support Local Communities** Congress should maintain and enhance its investment in FY2022 domestic appropriations that keep local communities strong. This should include these 10 critical areas:

- Increase **Appalachian Regional Commission POWER** grants for economic diversification to \$1 billion
- Fund **HUD Community Development Block Grants** at \$3.5 billion
- Boost **EPA Clean Water SRF** grants to \$9 billion and **Drinking Water SRF** grants to billion, and require states to provide a substantial portion of these funds to localities in form of non-loan resources include grants and debt principal forgiveness
- Boost **U.S. Department of Transportation** grant funding for local projects, including billion for National Infrastructure Investments (BUILD Grants), \$900 million Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grants, and \$1 billion annually for a renewed "Transportation, Community, & System Preservation" (TCSP) program.
- Fund **Economic Development Administration (EDA)** Public Works, Economic Adjustment, Assistance to Coal Communities and other grants with at least \$500 million
- Fully fund U.S. **EPA Brownfield grants** at the authorized level of \$250 million
- Fund **USDA Rural Development Funding** at fully authorized level of \$2.33 billion, and increase and more flexible funding for community broadband projects to enable "Gig City" deployments in West Virginia
- Increase funding for first responders through \$500 million to the **FEMA Assistance Firefighters Grant**, \$500 million for **SAFER firefighter** personnel grants, and \$250 million for **Department of Justice COPS Hiring** grants
- Adjust National Park Service's **Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership** eligibility criteria to make these funds accessible to cities of less than 50,000 population – which includes essentially every WV city, who are thus barred now from this program.
- Provide \$150 million for **National Endowment for the Arts** grants to communities and institutions, and \$125 million for the **Historic Preservation Fund** at the National Park Service



WVML and West Virginia cities support a return to **congressionally-directed projects in the appropriations process**, which were part of Congress' role from founding of the Republic until just recently. Such earmarks should be focused on public purpose projects by municipal and other public entities, and key community non-profit under a process that is transparent, equitable, and based upon merit criteria.

2.) **A Bold Infrastructure Authorization:** America must close the massive infrastructure backlog in order to rebuild the flagging economy, particularly in areas of under-investment including West Virginia. It is time to rebuild together and get serious about \$1+ trillion National Infrastructure legislation which:

- Includes transportation (including FAST reauthorization), water/sewer infrastructure, broadband and telecommunications, smart cities technologies, renewable and reliable energy, clean vehicle infrastructure, brownfields, and green infrastructure.
- Fosters innovation, sustainable and resilient approaches, and meaningful local control over infrastructure investments in our communities through enhancement of decision-making authority by Metropolitan Planning Organizations.
- West Virginia must have strong and accessible passenger rail service to connect to the broader region, and WV cities support the creation of a Regional Rail Corridor that better links passenger rail service including both Amtrak and MARC Train, through the creation of multi-state passenger rail compacts among West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Ohio.



3.) **Support for Appalachian Innovation & Economic Diversification:** While West Virginia maintains faith and support in our traditional economic approaches, our state needs support for economic sector diversification and innovation.

- WVML endorses the recent proposal for a "**Marshall Plan for Middle America**" to keep communities strong as the fossil-fuel economy continues to decline. (*see e.g., www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/22/marshall-plan-middle-america-eight-marxists/*), and supports legislation such as the "Marshall Plan for Coal Country Act" (S. 4306) and the "Environmental Justice for All Act" (H.R. 5936) to implement these efforts.
- Federal programs should enhance support for R&D, industry and institutional partnerships, pilot initiatives and other approaches to sector diversification in Appalachia. Key sectors include downstream shale gas manufacturing and other emerging manufacturing industries, tourism and outdoor recreation, tech sector approaches including cybersecurity/cloud services/data centers, and life/health sciences.
- WVML endorses the proposal from the Biden Administration to create a new "**Task Force on Coal & Power Plant Communities**", and requests the opportunity to be part of this task force.

4.) **Resources for Healthy & Resilient Communities:** West Virginia's citizens and families are among the most unhealthy in the nation, and need resources & new approaches to tackle these challenges.

- The opioid crisis continues to ravage West Virginia communities, destroying families and disrupting the State's economy. As stated by the National League of Cities, while Congress has authorized billions of dollars in federal funding to states for opioid abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services, there is a lack of clarity from Congress and the Administration on how States should use the money that has left millions of dollars in federal funding unspent. Thus, Congress and the Administration must ensure that **funds appropriated for substance abuse, treatment, prevention and recovery programs are both robust and accessible to local governments.**

- According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, West Virginia has the highest rate of pre-existing conditions among non-elderly adults (37%) of any state in the nation. Congress and the Administration must combat – with real legislative enactments – that people with **preexisting health conditions** are guaranteed equal access and affordable health insurance, that **essential medical benefits** are guaranteed, that the poor have access to **affordable health insurance**, and that resources are devoted to **population health approaches** in communities.
- West Virginia has been pounded by natural disasters including floods and storms. We call on Congress, the Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies to maintain resources for **pre-disaster hazard mitigation, resiliency planning, and disaster recovery**, through approaches such as the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) funding, including more funding for all-hazards planning by smaller & rural cities.



5.) **Tax Incentives for Revitalization of Downtowns:** Many West Virginia cities are determined to restore grand but deteriorated downtown buildings for new economic investment and improved quality of life that can retain and attract young and entrepreneurial workers and families. Federal tax incentives for downtown rehabilitation are critical for these efforts in aging West Virginia communities. WVML calls on Congress to:



- Continue the **Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit**, and to permanently increase this credit from 20% to 30% of qualified expenses for projects costing less than \$2.5 million. Also, Congress should create greater flexibility for municipalities and nonprofit organizations to access Historic Tax Credit benefits. WVML supports legislation such as the bipartisan "HTC GO" bills proposed in the 116th Congress (H.R. 2825/S. 2615).
- Pass the "**REHAB Act**" – Revitalizing Economies, Housing, and Business Act", a bipartisan bill introduced in the 116th Congress (H.R. 6175) that would create federal tax credits for redeveloping heterotering and blighted buildings.
- WVML also calls for a renewal of the **New Market Tax Credit**, and for the preservation and shoring up of the 4% and 9% tax credits for private investment in affordable housing (LIHTC).

6.) **Support for Anchor Institutions in Communities:** The new economy in cities is being built in large part around anchor institutions including hospitals, health systems, colleges and universities, innovation districts, and other anchors. WVML urges Congress to appropriate funding for a new, \$50 million "Anchoring Neighborhoods, Communities & Housing to Opportunities for Revitalization" (ANCHOR) program to provide strategic planning grants to localities that partner with eds, meds & other anchor institutions on economic revitalization initiatives.



WVML Federal Issues (1 of 2)

- * **FY22 Budget & Appropriations for Rebuilding Cities**
 - 12 programs
 - Push for largest increases currently proposed
 - Earmarks
- * **Infrastructure Authorization / Build Back Better**
 - Beyond transportation to water/sewer, telecom & smart cities, energy, brownfields
 - WV passenger rail expansion
 - Sustainable & resilient
 - More local control via MPOs
- * **Appalachian Revitalization** (including seat at table)



Key FY2022 Appropriations

ARC POWER - \$1 billion

U.S. DOT BUILD Grant - \$4 billion

EPA Brownfield Grants -- \$350 million

First Responders - \$500 million for FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants, \$500 million for FEMA SAFER fire grants, \$250 million for DOJ COPS Hiring grants

Arts & Historic Preservation - \$150 million for NEA, \$125 million for NPS Historic Preservation Fund

USDA Rural Development \$2.33 billion

HUD CDBG - \$3.5 billion

Clean Water/Drinking Water SRF - \$9 billion & \$5 billion



Review of All Issues (2 of 2)

- * **Healthy & Resilient Communities**
 - Opioid resources
 - Affordable health insurance
 - All-hazards disaster mitigation & recovery
- * **Tax Incentives for Downtowns**
 - Historic rehabilitation tax credits
 - REHAB Act
 - New Market Tax Credits
 - LIHTC
- * **Anchor Institutions via HUD**



WVML Advocacy Campaign – The Rollout

- * Choose an issue or two you can **champion**
- * Put a **real story** behind the pitch
- * **Raise your voice locally:** pass a Council resolution backing the WVML agenda; get local press; move into social media (by mid-April)
- * Cover **letters** on top of WVML agenda to Senator Manchin, Senator Capito, and your Member of Congress - emphasizing key issues (by mid-April)
- * **Talk/visit with Members of Congress** (by end of April)
- * **Letters to White House Task Force / key agencies** (by end of April)
- * Participate in **WVML visits/zooms**



WVML Tools

- * WVML will send emails with step-by-step tools as we need them rolled out; and place on WVML.org website
- * Sample resolutions, press releases & social media posts
- * Sample cover letters to WV delegation
- * Sample letters to White House & agencies
- * Contact info for WV congressional offices for requesting meetings/zooms



Q&A / Discussion



Thank you!

Matt Ward & Sarah Marin

Matt.Ward@StrategiesDC.com

Sarah.Marin@StrategiesDC.com

202.422.2411

www.StrategiesDC.com

For more info, contact WVML's
Jacy Faulkner and Travis Blosser