



Office of the Will County Board

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Board helps set national policies affecting American communities

*Joining forces with thousands of county officials across the country
to send message to Capitol Hill*

JOLIET, IL- Will County Board members recently joined 2,300 county officials from across the country to establish national policies and work collaboratively to find and share innovative solutions to challenges facing American communities. Board members Steve Wilhelmi (D-Joliet), Denise Winfrey (D-Joliet) and Diane Zigrossi (D-Crest Hill) participated in the 2013 National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference in Fort Worth, Texas.

"By participating in NACo, we are able to give a voice to the many local issues we face and send a message to our federal representatives that county government delivers essential services to residents," said Winfrey, who chairs NACo's Labor and Employment Steering Committee and was just appointed vice chair of the Community and Economic Development Steering Committee. She also was named to the association's Large Urban County Caucus.

Winfrey pointed out 44 percent of America's roadways and 228,026 bridges and almost one third of the nation's transit systems and airports are owned and maintained by counties. In addition, counties own 964 hospitals and spend \$68 billion on health care services annually. Counties also respond to all disasters and in most cases without assistance from other levels of governments.

"Washington, D.C. needs to be reminded of the realities we are facing on the frontlines," said Democratic caucus chair Zigrossi, a member of NACo's Human Services and Education Steering Committee. "We are hopeful by setting policies and agendas with a strong and clear voice that it will result in meaningful solutions from the Administration and Congress."

Decisions made during the annual conference allow counties to present a unified platform on issues such as economic development, transportation, water infrastructure, health care and court and jail systems. NACo members who participated in the conference helped to shape the policies and federal funding priorities that will guide the organization over the next 12 months.

"Congress and administration officials need to fully understand and appreciate why counties matter in America's system of federalism," said Republican caucus chair Jim Moustis (R-Frankfort), a member of NACo's Large Urban County Caucus. "Local governments are often the ones shouldering the burden of unfunded mandates while working with limited resources and shrinking budgets. Yet, we continue to provide important services and programs to our constituents."

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