

# Washington Update



## THE 2016 WASHINGTON OFFICE ISSUE SURVEY IS NOW UNDERWAY: SHARE YOUR INPUT!

It's that time of year again: the NASACT Washington office wants your feedback on important federal relations issues that you may face in 2016.

Please fill out the [survey](#) by Friday, March 18.

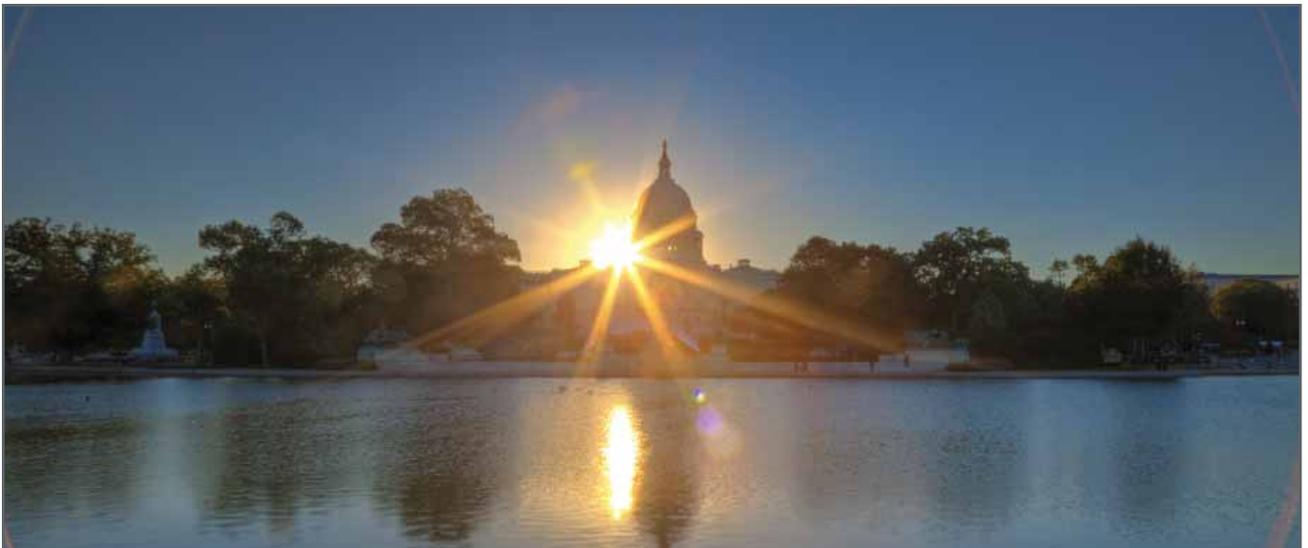
Your responses are extremely important to us, and the data will not be used or shared with any outside parties.

Thank you for your time!

## HULTGREN AND RUPPERSBERGER LAUNCH MUNICIPAL FINANCE CAUCUS

Representatives Randy Hultgren (R-IL) and Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD) have announced the creation of the Municipal Finance Caucus to fight for state and local governments' ability to independently finance projects. The purpose of the Municipal Finance Caucus is to act as a forum to discuss the opportunities and challenges for states and local governments to independently fund initiatives that will strengthen their communities and to advocate for bipartisan policies that enhance their access to the capital markets. Key issues that merit strong consideration include: protecting the tax exempt status of municipal debt, understanding how financial regulations treat such debt, and ensuring there is a robust market for municipal securities. In announcing the caucus, Rep. Hultgren noted:

“The survival and reinforcement of municipal finance is important to my district in Illinois, and to communities throughout the country. Local infrastructure and improvement projects help the creation of local, good-paying jobs for construction workers, engineers, pipe fitters, welders and more. At its heart, a municipal bond preserves federalism by allowing local communities to raise their own funds and carry out their own improvements without the help or intrusion of the federal government. This bipartisan



caucus will ensure these issues get the attention they deserve in Congress.”

Last year, Reps. Hultgren and Ruppertsberger sent a bipartisan letter to House leaders in support of municipal finance. Joined by 122 of their colleagues (63 Democrats and 61 Republicans), Hultgren and Ruppertsberger asked leaders to reject any proposal to cap or eliminate the deduction on tax-exempt municipal bonds used to finance the vast majority of infrastructure projects in America’s communities. They led a similar letter in the 113th Congress. Rep. Hultgren is also an original cosponsor of H.R. 2209, which requires the appropriate federal banking agencies to treat certain municipal obligations as level 2A liquid assets and which passed the House in February.

## STATE SNAP HEARING EXAMINES STATE FLEXIBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

The House Agriculture Committee conducted a hearing last Wednesday entitled “Past, Present, and Future of SNAP: Examining State Options.” Panelists included Stephanie Muth, deputy executive commissioner for the Office of Social Services at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and Stacy Dean, vice president for food assistance policy at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. The goal of the hearing was to have the committee gain a better understanding of the various options and flexibility states have when implementing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

While the federal government provides parameters for the program, SNAP’s statutes, regulations, and waivers provide state agencies with numerous policy options to adapt their programs to meet the needs of low-income people in their states. Certain options may facilitate program design goals, better target benefits to those most in need, streamline program administration and field operations, or coordinate SNAP activities with other programs for low-income families.

In discussing her state’s SNAP activities, Ms. Muth noted the new ways they are attempting to combat waste and abuse within their \$435 million dollar program:

“...As the state has shifted to increase the use of self-service, there has also been a shift in the reliance of technology to prevent and detect fraud. For example, Texas has implemented an identity verification process in the online application, but due to federal restrictions, the applicant has the option to not complete it. In addition, the state is implementing increased analytics to EBT card purchases, similar to the technology that credit card companies use to detect potentially fraudulent activity.”

Full video of the hearing and testimony from all panelists can be found at

<http://agriculture.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=3165>.

## TASK FORCE ON TAX REFORM RELEASES MISSION STATEMENT

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-TX), chairman of the Task Force on Tax Reform, has released a mission statement and broad policy goals for the task force. The task forces, comprised of committee chairs of jurisdiction, will seek input from all members to ensure their ideas and perspectives are reflected in the agendas.

The goals of the Tax Reform Task Force are to create jobs, grow the economy, and raise wages by reducing tax rates, removing special interest carve-outs, and making the tax code simpler and fairer. Specifically, the task force’s mission statement makes a veiled reference to the municipal bonds tax-exemption by “closing loopholes, eliminate special-interest carve-outs, and limit the deductions, exclusions and credits that riddle the tax code today.”

The full mission statement can be found at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/task-force-on-tax-reform-releases-mission-statement/>.

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