



Capitol Connection E-Newsletter- May 2015

- **2015 Policy Committee Issues Survey**
- **ACCG and GMA Release Joint Comments on EPD Drought Rules**
- **Georgia DOR Accepting Comments on Proposed Rule Changes to GATE Program**
- **Final Legislative Update Available for Review**
- **NACo Calls on Congress to Repeal Excise Tax on Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance**
- **Top Four Juvenile Incentive Courts Recognized**
- **Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Project**
- **Telehealth Grant Opportunity**
- **Congressman Austin Scott to Host Grant Workshops in Houston and Lowndes Counties**

2015 Policy Committee Issues Survey

Legislative advocacy and public policy development are some of the primary services ACCG provides to counties. ACCG is requesting feedback from county officials and asks that they **complete the 2015 Policy Survey before May 31, 2015**. Findings in the Policy Survey will be used to present recommendations to each of the seven ACCG Policy Committees for them to consider during their summer meetings.

Click [here](#) to obtain a copy of the survey.

Please submit all completed forms to ACCG Legislative Policy Coordinator Ines Owens at iowens@accg.org or fax them to Attn: Ines Owens at (404) 525-2477.

ACCG and GMA Release Joint Comments on EPD Drought Rules

On Monday, May 11, ACCG and the Georgia Municipal Association jointly submitted official comments on the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (EPD) proposed rules for Drought Management and Water Supply Efficiency. Primarily, the associations are concerned with dangerous precedent being set on utility water rate management and the EPD director will be given broader, unilateral and ambiguous authority in granting local water permits. To view the ACCG/GMA comments, please click [here](#).

To view the proposed Drought Management Rule, please click [here](#).

To view the proposed Water Supply Efficiency Rule, please click [here](#).

Contact ACCG Associate Legislative Director Todd Edwards with any questions regarding this information. He can be reached at (404) 522-5022 or tedwards@accg.org.

Georgia DOR Accepting Comments on Proposed Rule Changes to GATE Program

The Georgia Department of Revenue (DOR) is accepting comments on proposed rule changes to the Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) Program. Some proposed changes include exempting grain bins, fencing equipment, and irrigation equipment, regardless of whether those items become incorporated into real property or remain tangible personal property as well as revising the definition of “agricultural operations” in addition to others. Click [here](#) to read the official announcement from DOR. **Interested parties should submit their comments to DOR no later than Friday, May 29 at 10 a.m.**

Please contact ACCG Legislative Director Clint Mueller at (404) 522-5022 or cmueller@accg.org if you have any questions.

Final Legislative Update Available for Review

Each year, ACCG compiles a final Legislative Update to summarize legislation of importance to counties passed by the Georgia General Assembly. This Legislative Update is designed to serve as your guide to legislation from the 2015 session of the Georgia General Assembly and includes a brief summary, effective dates and the county impact(s) for each bill and resolution. Please note that major pieces of legislation impacting counties have a more detailed summary in the Appendix.

The final Legislative Update can be accessed [here](#).

NACo Calls on Congress to Repeal Excise Tax on Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and Berkeley County, Pa., Commissioner Christian Leinbach represented counties on Capitol Hill during a press conference on bipartisan legislation to repeal the remaining 40 percent excise tax on employer-provided benefits. Commissioner Leinbach focused on the negative impact the tax would have on county budgets and workforce.

When passed in March 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) included a provision with an excise tax on employee-sponsored health coverage that will take effect in 2018. NACo policy opposes the taxation of health benefits provided to county employees. Click [here](#) for more information from the national county association.

Please contact ACCG Associate Legislative Director Shaun Adams at (404) 522-5022 or sadams@accg.org if you have any questions.

Top Four Juvenile Incentive Courts Recognized

The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Commissioner Avery Niles recently honored the top four juvenile incentive courts in the state. On behalf of Gov. Deal, Commissioner Niles

presented commendations to the juvenile courts in Macon-Bibb, Columbia, Chatham, and Lowndes counties. The courts were recognized for significant reductions in juvenile offender commitments to DJJ and for their usage of alternative community options. DJJ Commissioner Avery Niles commended the courts for continuing to apply innovative solutions to Georgia's complex juvenile justice tasks and requirements. The governor presented commendations for meeting and exceeding all program outcomes and requirements in the Juvenile Incentive Grant Program; exhibiting exemplary records while achieving the Incentive Grant Program goals by appropriately placing youth in effective, community-based services; and for protecting the public while preserving family relationships.

Visit www.djj.state.ga.us for more information on the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Project

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, is seeking applications for the FY 2015 Body-Worn Camera Partnership Program. This program furthers the Department's mission by supporting the safe and fair administration of justice. Local governments that perform law enforcement functions to regional public and private entities are eligible to apply for this competitive grant program and are encouraged to contact the Bureau of Justice Assistance with any questions regarding the application process.

Applicants that recently submitted an application for the Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) "Body Worn Camera Problem-Solving Demonstration Program" solicitation category are encouraged to also submit an application under this solicitation, as only a small number of SPI applications can be funded based on current appropriations.

All applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on June 16, 2015.**

Click [here](#) for further information provided in the full grant announcement.

Telehealth Grant Opportunity

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) is pleased to announce the release of the Rural Child Poverty Telehealth Network Grant Program (RCP-TNGP). This is a three-year pilot program that will award up to three grants for a total annual investment of \$975,000 in FY15 to support RCP-TNGP. The program will assess new ways to use telehealth networks to expand access, coordinate and improve the quality of health care services for children living in impoverished rural areas, and in particular how to enhance such networks through the integration of social and human service organizations.

FORHP is committed to addressing and improving the quality of health care services for children living in rural areas. In an effort to address this concern, the RCP-TNGP will support projects that provide innovative and effective ways to address the broad range of health care needs of children living in impoverished rural areas through the integration of human and social service

organizations into traditional telehealth networks. Eligible applicants include public and private non-profit entities, including faith-based and community organizations, as well as federally-recognized Indian tribal governments and organizations. **The deadline to apply is Monday, June 22, 2015.** Visit [here](#) for more information.

Congressman Austin Scott to Host Grant Workshops in Houston and Lowndes Counties

U.S. Congressman Austin Scott will host grant workshops specifically for local government officials and departments to help them navigate through state and federal funds available to their communities. Scott will host two workshops, one on May 27 in Warner Robins/Houston County and another on May 28 in Valdosta/Lowndes County. Representatives from federal and state agencies will be in attendance to provide information about their available grants and programs. Access the links below for additional information on each workshop.

[May 27 Houston County Workshop](#)

[May 28 Lowndes County Workshop](#)