

2020 CITY OF AURORA FEDERAL PRIORITIES

POLICE REFORM

Subject: Measures to increase the integrity and accountability of law enforcement

Congress

The death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 while in the custody of the Minneapolis Police Department sparked national protests and has brought renewed focus on the necessity of police reform at the national level. The city has been proactive on reforms inside their own department but believes federal legislation is needed.

Requests: The city supports the following principles to be included in future congressional legislation surrounding police reform.

- Justice for Breonna Taylor Act - The Justice for Breonna Taylor Act introduced in the U.S. Senate would prohibit no-knock warrants, which allows law enforcement officials to forcibly enter a home without announcing their authority or purpose. The city supports this legislation.
- National Ban of Chokeholds - The city supports a national ban of the use of chokeholds, carotid holds, sleeper holds or similar techniques by law enforcement.
- Emmett Till Antilynching Act – The Emmett Till Antilynching Act passed by the U.S. House of Representatives establishes a new criminal civil rights violation for lynching. Specifically, a person who conspires to commit certain civil rights offenses (e.g., a hate crime act) is subject to criminal penalties. The city supports this legislation.
- National Database – The city supports the creation of a national database to track officer wrongdoing.
- Failure to Intervene – The city supports legislation that would create a national standard to hold police officers accountable in a situation where they fail to intervene to prevent another officer from using excessive force.
- Eliminating Mandatory Minimum Prison Sentences – The city supports legislation that would end mandatory minimum prison sentences.
- Ending Civil Asset Forfeiture - The city supports legislation that would end civil asset forfeiture by law enforcement.
- Ending Qualified Immunity Act – The city supports the Ending Qualified Immunity Act introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives that would eliminate qualified immunity and restore Americans’ ability to obtain relief when police officers violate their constitutionally secured rights.

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

Subject: Measures to broaden disbursement and use of funds

Congress

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stability Act (CARES Act) included the Coronavirus Relief Fund which set aside \$150 billion to provide direct funding to states and local governments to combat the pandemic. This fund included a requirement that local governments have a population of at least 500,000 in order to directly access these funds.

Requests: The city of Aurora urges Congress to consider additional funds for the Coronavirus Relief Fund and lower the population threshold to access the funds.

SMALL BUSINESS

Subject: Measures to support small business and workers

Congress

Due to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak small businesses have been forced to halt operation due to social distancing requirements and executive orders to cease operations. Small businesses that have been affected include restaurants, coffee shops, breweries, nail salons, massage parlors, retail outlets, and others. Many businesses have chosen to fully close and have laid off workers. In order to assist small businesses and workers the city will support legislation that provides loans to small businesses and requirements to continue to employ workers

Requests: The city supports the following principles to be included in future congressional supplementals to combat the economic effects of the Covid-19 outbreak.

- Small Business Stabilization Fund - The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering designated states and territories low-interest federal disaster loans to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The city supports additional funding for this program.
- Additional funding for National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grants: \$100 Million in National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs) has been designated in response to COVID-19. The city supports additional funding for this grant program.
- Support for delay of payment of employer payroll taxes. The provision allows employers and self-employed individuals to defer payment of the employer share of the Social Security tax they otherwise are responsible for paying to the federal government with respect to their employees.
- Increase in funding for additional federal grants and flexibility of use for the city to disperse funds to businesses who have been forced to shut down
- Measures to incentivize participation by local business in statewide Work Share programs

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Subject: Federal programs and grants for housing and homelessness

Congress

The Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak has forced the city to reevaluate homeless and housing programs and provision of services. Most city sponsored homeless shelters rely on group living situations that can be detrimental to containing further infection. To that end the city supports measures that provides additional funding for the homeless population to shelter in non-congregant shelters including vacant motel and hotel rooms. Housing assistance is a critical measure to prevent additional renters and homeowners from falling into homelessness. To that end the city supports measures at the federal level to allow flexibility in use of federal grants.

Requests: The city supports the following principles to be included in future congressional supplementals to combat the economic effects of the Covid-19 outbreak.

- Flexibility in use of CDBD Grant including a removal of caps to allow provision of housing for non-congregate shelter for homeless and additional services
- Increase in additional federal grants and flexibility of use to provide housing for non-congregate shelter for homeless
- The FHFA and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) have suspended foreclosures and evictions for enterprise-backed mortgages and FHA-insured mortgages for 120 days. The city requests these moratoriums be extended for the duration of the Covid-19 national emergency.
- Support for waivers for renters for federal housing programs so those programs can respond nimbly.
- Emergency Shelter Grant Program - provide \$105 billion to state and local entities to protect homeless people and those on the brink from becoming homeless from COVID-19 through the Emergency Shelter Grant Program and rental assistance programs for low income individuals and families.
- Support for a suspension of rental and utility payments (through HUD) if income has suffered through virus for duration of crisis.
- Support for additional funds for low income renters currently taking assistance

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Subject: FEMA guidelines on use of grants and reimbursement of funds

Congress

Due to the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak a National Emergency Declaration has been declared and FEMA has been activated. As states and municipalities mobilize into action clear guidelines on how FEMA will reimburse state and local governments is needed.

Request: The city requests FEMA allow as much flexibility on how local governments utilize federal funds and that reimbursement for use of funds be broad and all-encompassing

PAID LEAVE/PAID SICK LEAVE

Subject: Tax Credits for Paid Lave/Paid Sick Leave

Congress

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act requires businesses and public agencies to provide paid leave and paid sick leave but excludes municipalities from receiving a payroll tax credit that is available for businesses. The city of Aurora urges Congress to support legislation to allow municipalities to be eligible for the payroll tax credit for emergency paid and sick leave.

Allowing state and local governments to recoup costs through the payroll tax credit will grant the city the ability to afford these added costs.

Request: The city requests that additional funds be designated to allow for municipalities to mitigate this financial cost.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Subject: Water Infrastructure

Aurora Water is committed to operating and maintaining significant water infrastructure. During this pandemic crisis Aurora Water, has suspended water shut-offs for non-payment to ensure residents have access to water during the duration of the crisis. Some customers may struggle with their ability to pay their water bills as a result of the pandemic and this may compound for a period following the pandemic. Water utilities are well positioned to manage grant or low interest loan funding to help support customers challenged with income shortages to provide for basic needs such as water service.

Request: The city respectfully requests Congress to include funds to allow water utilities to assist struggling customers in covering water service costs during this challenging time.

Subject: Support for Healthy Forests Legislation

Congress, U.S. Forest Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers

Aurora water supplies originate in the headwaters of three major basins within Colorado and include the Arapahoe, San Isabel and White River National Forests. Protecting Aurora's watersheds, including these National Forests, from devastating wildfires is critical to the success of the Aurora's mission to enhance and protect the quality of life for Aurora citizens by providing safe, dependable, and sustainable water services. Aurora's municipal water supplies suffered greatly as a result of previous forest fires. Barriers to prevention and restoration from wildfire are natural (forest and soil conditions, physical watershed conditions and the sequence and magnitude of rain falling on the burned area) and man-made (overly burdensome rules, regulations and laws). Healthy Forests will continue to be a priority for resilient and reliable drinking water supplies and request Congress to keep the issue at the forefront for funding and improving on forest treatment actions.

Requests: The city of Aurora supports adequate funding for forest programs and the streamlining of the approval process for watershed projects.

Subject: Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

Congress, Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers

Colorado has one of the most comprehensive and successful aquatic nuisance species (ANS) abatement programs in the country. ANS are a significant and rapidly growing threat to Colorado's water supply infrastructure and to outdoor recreation. ANS include invasive animals, plants and disease-causing pathogens that are not native to Colorado's rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands, and have harmful effects on natural resources, water supply systems and recreational opportunities. Aurora's invasive species include zebra and quagga mussels—which are very prolific once established—and cause shell buildup and blockages of pipes, valves and other facilities, which are used to convey water.

The Cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs provide the majority of funding for inspection programs targeting aquatic nuisance species at both Bureau of Reclamation owned Turquoise and Twin Lakes Reservoirs, with additional funding provided by the Pueblo Board of Water Works, the U.S. Forest Service, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Even though these facilities are managed by the federal Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau is currently unwilling to provide funding for any ANS inspection program. Other federal agencies, such as the Army Corps of Engineers, fund ANS prevention and treatment at their federally owned facilities. The City of Aurora spends approximately \$35,000 for inspection at both reservoirs, with that amount increasing in the future as funding from the State of Colorado is also anticipated to decrease significantly.

Request: The city of Aurora requests support for S.2975 Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act. The Act will provide the Bureau of Reclamation with explicit authority to partner with states and municipalities to fund prevention actions and streamline efforts between federal agencies to limit the movement of aquatic nuisance species.

Subject: Transportation Infrastructure

Congress

To quickly respond and provide flexible funds to restore and repair transportation and infrastructure services in communities, Congress should quickly influx significant investment through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG). STBG can be used widely by local, regional and state partners on almost any transportation asset which will ensure that its quickly utilized on high-priority projects in every region of the U.S. Additionally, to further accelerate its use, remove match requirements so 100% federal investment reaches communities where the needs are based.

Request: The city requests Congress consider provisions to accelerate the reimbursement and payment process of the federal transportation programs to ensure that state and local governments do not need to set-aside state or local funds that would otherwise be used to keep people on the job, continue services, or pay businesses for services and goods.

Subject: Reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

Congress and Department of Transportation

The City will closely monitor developments in Congress related to the reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015, set to expire in September 2020. Toward that end, the City would be supportive of legislation that addresses current program funding shortages and adjustments to program regulations.

Requests: The city supports the following principles for the Reauthorization of the FAST Act:

- Provisions that provide direct funding to cities and increase local decision-making authority
- Increased funding for FHWA Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130), a program that provides funds for the elimination of hazards at railway-highway crossings.
- Increased overall funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and an increase in the percentage of sub-allocation to urbanized areas.
- Increase funding for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities. Provide additional funding for multimodal projects that promote economic development and safety

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITY

Subject: Access to testing

Congress

Making sure that critical testing for the coronavirus is available widely is also an important priority.

Request: The city respectfully request that the upcoming federal recovery package remove current restrictions that prevent Medicaid coverage of testing for green-card holders and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients.

MUNICIPAL BOND MARKET

Subject: Stabilizing the Municipal Bond Market

Congress

The Federal Reserve recently announced a \$500 billion program intended to provide relief and stability to municipal government budgets through the purchase of municipal debt.

Unfortunately, this program only applies to cities with a population of 1,000,000 or more.

Request: The city requests Congress urge the Federal Reserve to expand eligibility and lower the population threshold.

MILITARY/VETERANS

Subject: Support Buckley Air Force Base and the associated economic development in Aurora

Congress & Department of Defense

The City of Aurora is home to Buckley Air Force Base, serving more than 92,000 active duty, National Guard, Reserve and retired personnel throughout Aurora and the surrounding community. The Base hosts the 460th Space Wing, a unit of the U.S. Air Force Space Command, as well as the Colorado National Guard 120th Fighter Squadron. Since its establishment in 1943, Buckley Air Force Base has served a critical role in the economic vitality of the City of Aurora. In the face of budget cuts and a potential base realignment and closure process, one of the City's highest priorities is the support of the ongoing mission of the Base.

Toward that end, the City has prioritized the widening and extension of 6th Ave. to better support access to the Base. The City of Aurora has also been engaged in a mission-supportive endeavor during the past several years to plan and implement a Compatible Use Buffer Project with a focus on preventing incompatible development around the Base. Funding from the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program has been key in our successful efforts to create this buffer zone.

Finally, the newly created Defense Community Infrastructure Program - authorized at \$100 million in the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act - provides critical funding for off-base but adjacent community infrastructure projects that are key to supporting the Buckley mission. The city will closely monitor the implementation of this program.

Request: The City of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to continue support of Buckley Air Force Base and assist in directing future missions to the Base. In particular, the City supports the Colorado Air National Guard's request for Buckley AFB to be an F-35 bed down base. In addition, the city of Aurora seeks support for future requests of the Defense Community Infrastructure Program as we protect the viability of the Base's operations and defense capabilities.

MARIJUANA

Subject: Cannabis Industry and Banking Regulations

Congress, Department of Justice

In May of 2014, the City Council approved the licensure of retail marijuana establishments throughout the City of Aurora. The Council authorized 24 retail marijuana store licenses, with four licenses allowed in each of the six Council wards. However, the use, possession and sale of cannabis remains a federal crime. This conflict in federal and local marijuana laws has made it difficult for legitimate recreational marijuana businesses to access basic banking services. With financial institutions hesitant to provide services to cannabis businesses, the industry has become cash reliant, creating public safety issues and the potential for money laundering to become more prevalent.

Request: The City of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to lift the illegality of banking services to the cannabis industry. Toward that end, the City asks for legislation that

would prohibit penalizing a bank for providing financial services to a legitimate state-sanctioned and regulated cannabis business.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Subject: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership (HOME) Grant, and HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) PROGRAMS

Congress, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), & Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The increased cost of housing in the City of Aurora, as with many cities across the country, has reached a crisis level and continues to worsen. These high housing costs have contributed to a dramatic increase in homelessness. The City of Aurora relies on an annual allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) funds from HUD. The programs help to create a suitable living environment for low- and moderate-income persons, households and neighborhoods through funding the preservation and development of affordable housing, improving public infrastructure, and expanding economic opportunities.

The City's housing authority is currently the recipient of only 85 HUD-VASH vouchers, despite being the third largest City in the state and with a large veteran demographic. With the completed VA Regional Medical Center in Aurora, we anticipate a sharp increase in the number of homeless veterans, making additional HUD-VASH vouchers critical.

Request: The City of Aurora requests Colorado Congressional delegation support for an increase in funding for the CDBG and HOME programs. In addition, the City requests Congress and federal agencies support the following:

- S.923/HR 1978, the Fighting Homelessness Through Services Act, sponsored by Senators Feinstein and Murkowski.
- S.3030, the Eviction Crisis Act, sponsored by Senator Bennet of Colorado
- An increase of the HUD maximum income restrictions for the down payment assistance and the rental assistance program in order to stay relevant in the current market.
- Programs that preserve housing for extremely low-income households, including those that address chronic homelessness among veterans, youth and families.
- An increase in the number of HUD-VASH vouchers allocated for Aurora.
- Raise the Davis-Bacon project threshold to \$250,000 for non-residential and increase the CDBG housing unit threshold to 12 units to coincide with the HOME program.
- Eliminate the 15% set-aside of HOME funds for CHDOs.
- ESG – remove the 60% cap that may be used for emergency shelter.