



California State Association of Counties®

2025 Advocacy Priorities

Administration of Justice

- **Felony Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) Growth Cap and Penalty Program**
Previous program improvements align with the shared goal of reducing the number of IST commitments, while also reducing the total statewide county penalty amount in the millions of dollars, which will be critical as we approach fiscal year 2026-27 when the tiered penalty rate schedule will sunset. CSAC will continue advocacy to incorporate further changes to the IST growth cap and penalty program and engage on legislation and budget items that impact local systems and the larger IST population.
- **Juvenile Justice**
CSAC will continue to advocate for the necessary funding and resources to provide care for justice-involved youth and young adults close to their loved ones and ensure access to effective, individualized treatment while upholding public safety. The goal is to ensure that all youth are safe, healthy, and supported to become contributing members of their community.
- **California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal Justice-Involved Initiative (CalAIM JI)**
As counties implement this program, CSAC will continue to provide updates and guidance from the state, convene counties for vital information sharing and learning opportunities, and advocate for adequate, long-term funding necessary for successful implementation of the CalAIM JI initiative.

Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources

- **Community Resilience**
CSAC will advocate for appropriate state, federal and local emergency support and planning, funding for community resilience measures. Counties need investment from state and federal partners, including in areas where the state or federal government are the majority landowner, to prepare their communities against catastrophic future disasters, whether from wildfire, flood, heat, or other extreme weather events.
- **Energy Storage**
As the state continues to strive to meet its ambitious clean energy goals, the need for robust energy storage solutions is becoming increasingly

important. However, it's important that counties maintain local land-use authority when citing these projects and have the best available information to inform their decisions. CSAC staff will continue to work with state, local, and industry partners to provide counties with the resources they need to make the best-informed decisions, and advocate for resources to support citing and permitting.

➤ **Wildfire Insurance**

CSAC will continue to build upon these permits streamlining successes to develop permanent actions that improve county water, flood and environmental restoration projects while reducing the amount of time it takes to obtain state permits.

Government Finance and Administration

➤ **Address Workforce Challenges**

CSAC will continue to advocate for policies that help counties rebuild the public service pipeline. CSAC will also push back against efforts to make contracting more challenging, as third-party contractors have long performed vital roles in providing public services and whose necessity is acutely felt when workforce challenges exist.

➤ **State Imposed Mandate Reimbursement Reform and Debt Repayment**

CSAC will actively work with the Governor's administration and local government stakeholders to review the current mandate reimbursement system, identify potential alternatives to establish greater payment security, and reduce the potential for payment backlogs on services already rendered. To this end, CSAC will lead discussions and advocate for alternatives to the process for mandate determination, methodologies, and processes for mandate cost estimates, among other solutions.

➤ **Modernize the Brown Act and Promote Safe, Welcoming Public Meetings**

The Brown Act ensures that public decisions are deliberated on and made in public at noticed meetings in which the public can participate, but some of its out-of-date provisions make it difficult for members of boards, commissions, and advisory bodies to participate, especially those with young children, medical issues, or disabilities. CSAC will continue to lead in developing proposals to modernize the Brown Act and foster public meetings that are safe and welcoming for all community members.

Health and Human Services

➤ **CalAIM Implementation**

CSAC will continue to focus on the federal, state, and local finance implications, as well as the impacts on county operations, successful programs, and the people and families served. Additionally, CSAC will continue to advocate for prioritization and funding of counties to provide services that leverage counties' existing expertise and for the state to consult with counties in formulating and implementing all policy, operational and technological changes of this multi-faceted initiative.

➤ **CARE Act Funding/Implementation and Technical Assistance**

CSAC will continue to advocate to secure adequate, flexible, and sustained funding across all impacted local agencies to support counties' efforts in this new statewide program. Additionally, CSAC will advocate for any necessary program changes and needed technical assistance related to implementation as counties continue to roll out this new program statewide.

➤ **IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services)**

A statewide report that analyzes the costs and benefits of moving IHSS collective bargaining responsibilities from counties to the state level will be released in January and there is a strong likelihood that legislation on this issue will be introduced. CSAC will continue to engage on IHSS collective bargaining in a manner that protects county fiscal, programmatic, and administrative responsibilities for any possible transition of collective bargaining to the state level.

➤ **Early Childhood and Childcare**

CSAC will continue to look for ways to increase county advocacy on early childhood and childcare issues. This year, CSAC will expand its engagement with counties on early childhood and childcare issues as it relates to benefits to families, economic impacts, and connections to county administered programs. In addition, CSAC will look to build upon the work in 2024 to further engage on bill and budget items that align with county needs and county responsibilities.

➤ **Homelessness**

CSAC will advocate for ongoing homelessness funding, appropriate accountability mechanisms, and a broad range of homelessness bills and budget items at both the state and federal level that are aligned with the policy recommendations of the six pillars of the AT HOME plan. In addition, CSAC will remain engaged in the implementation of HHAP Rounds 5 and 6, which included increased collaboration, accountability, and planning requirements. CSAC will work with the Administration and Legislature on implementation needs and to highlight county urgency, utilization, and successes with this funding.

➤ **Proposition 1 Planning and Implementation / Behavioral Health Funding**

CSAC will continue to represent the needs of counties to successfully leverage investments and to make transformative changes envisioned in the voter-approved measure. That requires addressing the underlying county mental health plan funding shortfalls, and recognizing the resource and authority needs stemming from the expanding set of roles and responsibilities on county agencies.

➤ **Safety Net Programs**

CSAC will work to protect funding for county safety net programs in the state budget. Counties were able to preserve most of this funding in the 2024 Budget Act, but the state continues to experience significant fiscal uncertainty. There is the possibility that detrimental cuts to county health and human services (HHS) programs will once again be proposed in 2025. CSAC will work to highlight the importance of these programs and protect funding for the full range of HHS programs that counties administer.

Housing, Land Use and Transportation

➤ **Stabilize State Transportation Fund**

CSAC will assist efforts to broaden and stabilize the state's transportation funding system to ensure that counties continue to receive reliable funding for transportation programs.

➤ **Housing at-all Levels**

CSAC will support bills that seek to aid the construction of all types of housing, especially housing that supports the most vulnerable, while appropriately balancing county participation in the process.

➤ **Impact Fees**

Counties charge a variety of fees to support their duties to provide housing and land use planning, development and enforcement services. Advocates have begun to view these fees as excessive and have successfully passed legislation to restrict or eliminate a county's ability to collect these vital fees. CSAC will work to draw the link between these fees and the county staff they support to fulfill county responsibilities in the land use and housing spaces.

Federal Priorities

➤ **Resilience**

California's counties continue to be on the front lines of preparing for and responding to extreme weather events and natural disasters, including catastrophic fires, earthquakes and floods. Federal resources and investments are a key component of locally driven efforts to address the impacts of climate change, including the severity and increased frequency of major disasters. CSAC will continue to work with the California congressional delegation to pursue investments in key pre-disaster mitigation and resiliency initiatives. CSAC will also continue to work with congressional partners and other stakeholders on much-needed reforms to FEMA disaster preparedness and response programs.

➤ **Wildfire Insurance**

As disasters continue to increase in number and severity, homeowners in disaster-prone regions of the country face higher insurance premium, policy non-renewals, and, in many cases, some higher-risk communities do not have access to property insurance at all. CSAC will continue to engage with federal policymakers on how to effectively address the state's burgeoning wildfire insurance crisis.

➤ **Housing and Homelessness**

California's affordable housing and homelessness crises continue to impact counties statewide. CSAC's comprehensive AT HOME plan includes several federal policy proposals that are part of the holistic strategy aimed at helping individuals who are unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused, such as creating flexible housing subsidies and modifying federal Housing Choice Vouchers to help more individuals utilize rental assistance to maintain housing. Additionally, AT HOME promotes increased federal investments for key local programs and supportive services, including county behavioral health services. CSAC will continue to promote key aspects of AT HOME at the federal level, including working with members of the California congressional delegation, a number of whom have championed a series of association-supported housing and homelessness initiatives. CSAC will work to protect and enhance funding for key housing and homelessness programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

➤ **Affordable Connectivity Program**

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) expired in 2024 and, as of this writing, has not been renewed by Congress. CSAC will continue to aggressively advocate for permanent continuation of the ACP or a similar broadband benefit program.

➤ **Rural Development and Public Lands**

Despite efforts aimed at reauthorizing the 2018 Farm Bill, lawmakers fell short of renewing key agricultural, commodity, and nutrition programs in 2024. As a result, the 119th Congress will be responsible for advancing a new long-term Farm Bill package. As policymakers look to reauthorize the law in 2025, CSAC will continue to advocate for a robust rural development title and will seek to maintain and expand funding and eligibility for key nutrition programs, including SNAP/CalFresh. In addition, CSAC will remain engaged in federal forest management reform discussions and will support efforts to enhance wildfire protection, preparedness, and forest resiliency. Finally, CSAC will advocate for a long-term reauthorization of both the Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) program and the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program.

➤ **Protecting and Strengthening the Social Safety Net**

CSAC will continue to work to protect county administered safety-net programs, including Medicaid/Medi-Cal, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, child welfare, access to health care and services, public health, mental and behavioral health, aging and other important programs that support vulnerable populations.

➤ **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Reauthorization**

Many of the key provisions of the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) are slated to expire in September of 2026. All told, the historic bipartisan infrastructure law authorized \$1.2 trillion in spending for over 350 district programs across more than a dozen federal departments and agencies. In 2025, Congress will begin the process of reviewing the IIJA and considering options for reauthorizing program spending, including policy considerations for renewing the five-year surface transportation title of the Act. CSAC is in the process of developing its transportation priorities and will begin laying the groundwork with members of Congress in anticipation of the IIJA reauthorization process.

➤ **Victims of Crime Act**

Recent cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants have significantly impeded the ability of county district attorneys, law enforcement, and local non-profit agencies to provide essential crime victim services, including crisis intervention, emergency assistance, counseling, behavioral health, and shelter and emergency housing services. CSAC will continue to work to ensure that VOCA is adequately funded through the appropriations process. Moreover, CSAC will continue to urge Congress to enact legislation that would provide long-term funding certainty for VOCA grants by stabilizing the financial health of the Crime Victims Fund.

➤ **County Finance and Tax Priorities**

Key provisions of the 2017 *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* are set to expire at the end of 2025. As part of efforts to renew the law, CSAC will support efforts to reinstate or expand public financing tools that help counties fund key local infrastructure projects, including advocating for the reauthorization of Build America Bonds, the expansion of private activity bonds, the restoration of advance refunding bonds, and the protection of the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds. CSAC also will support an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. Finally, CSAC will support legislative efforts that would fully restore the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction and oppose any effort to further reduce or eliminate this tax benefit.

➤ **Help America Vote Act**

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) remains a vital source of federal funding for bolstering election security, improving voting systems, and modernizing infrastructure. CSAC will advocate for consistent and predictable funding, as well as essential policy improvements to address evolving election challenges. CSAC's priorities include securing additional resources to counter the growing impact of AI-generated misinformation, enhancing ADA-compliant infrastructure, and advancing county-driven voter education initiatives. CSAC also will promote the need for additional flexibility in how HAVA funds can be utilized, enabling counties to address their unique election-related needs effectively.