

2013

Federal Legislative Platform

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Johnson County Government
www.jocogov.org

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2013 Core Principles:

Oppose Unfunded Mandates: Johnson County supports minimizing the negative financial and staffing implications of “devolution”, the passing down of responsibilities to counties by the State and Federal governments by seeking funding for mandates and reasonable periods of time to phase in new responsibilities.

Financial Stability for County Government Services: Many fundamental government services are financed by the Federal and State governments and subsequently provided by local governments. As a key provider, Johnson County seeks assurance that the Federal and State portions of appropriations will continue at levels adequate to meet the needs of the recipients. Furthermore, Johnson County opposes reductions in funding for fundamental services that result from actual cuts, as well as cuts that result from lack of inflationary adjustments.

2013 Legislative Priorities:

1. Wet Weather Community Sustainability Act: Johnson County supports the introduction and passage of the Wet Weather Community Sustainability Act. This act would authorize the Environmental Protection Agency to modify secondary treatment standards to allow publicly owned treatment works (POTWs) and collection systems with an approved wet weather management plan to utilize alternative peak wet weather treatment technologies and management approaches in lieu of meeting secondary treatment requirements for peak wet weather flows. Current regulations require significantly higher costs for POTWs and collection systems for peak wet weather management that does not result in improved water quality over more efficient and cost effective methods. The adoption of this act would help allow municipalities, including Johnson County, to manage peak wet weather events in a cost-effective manner that is protective of the environment and public health from a technology-based and water quality-based approach.

2. Sunflower Army Ammunition Plan Redemption and Development: Johnson County encourages the continued support of efforts for the full remediation and environmental clean up of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant and return of that facility to productive local development and use. Discussion and progress continue between the property owners, the United States Army, and Johnson County. There is optimism that the discussion will continue to be positive and the facility will be a valuable part of Johnson County in the future.

3. Violence Against Women Act: Johnson County supports the renewal of funding for the S.T.O.P Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The Senate has recently passed this legislation and it is now in the House of Representatives. Johnson County receives \$120,000 per year through VAWA, of which the District Court receives \$40,000 and SAFEHOME \$80,000. The funds are crucial in maintaining a

specialized domestic violence court and providing advocacy services to victims of domestic violence involved in our court system. In 2012, over 1,700 domestic violence cases were processed in Johnson County.

4. Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) Local Support: Johnson County urges Congress to fully support Justice Reinvestment, in particular assistance to local level governments. Johnson County has recently been named a Justice Reinvestment Phase II site by the Department of Justice. Justice Reinvestment has provided Johnson County with technical assistance to develop and implement data driven strategies for a more efficient criminal justice system while protecting public safety. Johnson County appreciates this opportunity to be a leader in this effort.

5. Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act of 2013(JMHCA): Johnson County urges Congress to pass the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act that has been introduced by Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) and Rep. Rich Nugent (R-FL). Johnson County will complete in June 2013 the implementation of a Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program grant that funds a pilot “Co-Responder” project. This effort pairs a trained mental health professional with law enforcement to respond to a call when mental illness has been identified. To date, the co-responder has assisted in 573 calls, with only 7 resulting in an admission to our jail. In addition, the number of admissions to a state hospital bed has also been reduced from 54% in the year prior to having a co-responder to 17% in the first year with a co-responder. Johnson County hopes to take advantage of this funding in the future to continue these efforts.

6. The Excellence in Mental Health Act: Johnson County urges Congress to pass the Excellence in Mental Health Act. This legislation would put in place standards for Federally Qualified Community Behavioral Health Centers (FQCBHCs) providing substance abuse treatment and 24-hour crisis care that would be reimbursable through Medicaid. This allows for FQCBHCs to deliver whole-person health care for individuals with mental illness. Crisis intervention services help to prevent individuals from harming themselves or others and allow them to get the care they need to prevent future crises. The establishment of best practices and standards ensures that individuals are receiving appropriate and consistent treatment.

7. The Mental Health First Aid Act: Johnson County supports the passage of the Mental Health First Aid Act. This act provides \$20 million in grants to organizations to provide training to those who are likely to interact with individuals suffering from mental illness and helps them identify the signs and symptoms and how to respond when a person is in crisis. Appropriate training can help to identify a situation before it escalates, allowing for the individual to receive the treatment they need prior to an incident occurring. Suicide rates nationally have increased over the past several years, including in Johnson County, which saw a 70% increase from 2006 – 2010, and 65 in 2011. This closely mirrors the national trend of 12 suicides per 100,000 persons. The Johnson County Mental Health Center has already made efforts to try and reverse this trend by providing Mental Health First Aid training to 215 Johnson County residents in 2012, and hopes to increase the number of residents trained going forward.