

## Rep. Ellison and Mayor Rybak support the Local Jobs for America Act

Written by Lydia Schwartz

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The recession is forcing states and municipalities to cut jobs that are critically important—teachers, police, firefighters, childcare workers, and others. US Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-MN) and the Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak are promoting the Local Jobs for America Act, which will provide funding for municipal jobs. The US House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee have estimated that the act will create or save one million jobs across the country.

Support will be targeted directly to states and municipalities with the greatest number of people out of work in order to restore important local services. “Cities have been under tremendous pressure to lay off government jobs which only decreases our quality of life...It is entirely appropriate for the federal government to intervene since the private sector can’t provide the number of jobs that we need,” Ellison said. The Local Jobs for America Act will help ensure that local communities can still operate essential services. Because of the recession, many local communities have cut back on education, public safety, childcare, health care, and transportation. As a result, families who rely on these services are suffering the cost of these cutbacks.

According to a report from the National League of Cities, the US Conference of Mayors (USMC), and the National Association of Counties (NACo) without federal action, local governments will be forced to cut thousands of jobs and services for families and individuals across the country.

The National League of Cities represents municipal governments throughout the US. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance. The National League of Cities provides programs and services that give local leaders the tools and knowledge they need to better serve their communities, keep leaders informed of critical issues that affect municipalities and warrant action by local officials, and provide opportunities for involvement and networking to help city officials seek ideas, share solutions, and find common ground for the future.

USCM is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. USMC promotes the development of effective national urban/suburban policy, ensures that federal policy meets urban needs, and creates a forum in which mayors can share ideas and information.

NACo is currently the only national organization representing county governments. Driven by a strong membership, their Board of Directors represents counties across America. NACo’s Executive Committee is comprised of four officers elected by the membership, along with a regional representative from each of the four regions in the country. County leaders develop and shape the association’s mission and goal.

Rybak calls the Jobs for America Act the next step on our road to economic recovery. “After the private sector collapsed, leaving us in an economic catastrophe, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allowed us to maintain some of the critical services jobs, such as police and fixing potholes. We will lose them if we don’t take the next step,” he said.

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Rybak chides conservatives who use patriotism as an excuse to shut down programs and services during the recession. "I support bipartisanship but Republicans have said, 'No, no, no' all along the way," he said.

In order to bust through the gridlock, Ellison says, Americans must make these demands to Congress directly. He urges people to contact their US Senators in support of the act because he is confident it will pass in the US House of Representatives.

Another tactic that conservatives use to argue that we cannot afford these programs is fear of the deficit. Ellison admits that government "deficits are a problem but now is not the time to put the brakes on the economy...Deficit-reduction is still a priority but there will come a time to deal with it."

Rybak agrees saying that "we need to spend money to make money. The alternative is to do nothing and we continue to lose jobs." On August 16, the Mayor must present his budget recommendation to the Minneapolis City Council. However, Rybak says that he will probably have to revise it once cuts are made to local government aid at the state-level.

State cuts to local government aid forces cities to either cut programs and services or to raise property taxes. "Property taxes are the cruelest because they are not sensitive to a family's income," Ellison said. The Local Jobs for America Act will help prevent state and local tax increases. By supporting the services that local communities deem most necessary, the bill will help local governments avoid having to choose between eliminat-ing services and raising taxes.

The bill is estimated to provide over \$50 million to the City of Minneapolis to save or create an estimated 910 jobs. According to Rybak, there are currently about 400 people employed by the city. These include police, firefighters, and employment related to infrastructure and road repair. Ellison believes the Local Jobs for America Act would greatly accelerate lowering the minority unemployment rate. He says it will help create more diverse police and firefighter classes.

The Local Jobs for America Act will also provide funding for 50,000 on-the-job private-sector training positions. Creating local jobs will stimulate local businesses and create more jobs in the local economy. By increasing employment in local communities, families will be able to start spending again at their neighborhood businesses and favorite restaurants. This will help spur additional jobs for local small businesses.

For more information on the Local Jobs for America Act, or to see the full report on estimated funding for cities across the county, visit <http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2010/03/local-jobs-for-america-act.shtml>