

2009 Legislative Agenda



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NWA Federal Legislative Priorities

> **Card Check Legislation** – In 2009, Congress will reconsider legislation that would remove the secret ballot process for Union elections. This legislation, if enacted, will have a significant and potentially devastating impact on businesses of all sizes.

> **2009 Appropriation Requests** – We support 2009 appropriations request that would provide:

- Funding for I-540 short-term and interim upgrades.
- Funding for renovations to the UAMS-Northwest's Satellite Campus Facility.
- Funding for NWACC to establish the Southern U.S. Region's National Child Protection Training Center, to develop a Business-Entrepreneurship Development Center for Veterans and to establish the Global Business Development Center.

> **Funds for Infrastructure Projects** – The federal government needs to meet or exceed the fiscal year 2009 highway funding guarantees as set forth in SAFETEA-LU to ensure that there is no decrease in federal formula highway funding.

> **Highway Reauthorization** – As Congress begins deliberation of the next six-year highway reauthorization bill, we also strongly support additional federal resources for infrastructure projects. The nation's infrastructure is crumbling as states struggle to maintain their current network of highways and bridges. There are almost no resources available to address the new infrastructure needs in rapidly growing areas like northwest Arkansas.

> **Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport** – We support up to a \$7 increase in the Passenger Facility Charge. The current Passenger Facility Charge of \$4.50 has not been raised in a number of years although construction costs continue to exponentially increase. The charges are locally imposed and proceeds are spent locally. It is not an "across the board" tax increase. XNA could potentially raise more than \$1.4 million that could be used for local projects.

We oppose efforts by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to include new Aircraft Rescue and Firefighters (ARFF) standards in the House version of the FAA Reauthorization bill. The IAFF proposal would dramatically increase ARFF staffing, training and equipment requirements with apparently little or no regard for the substantial implications that these requirements would have on airports, requiring XNA to increase staffing costs by more than \$1 million annually. We encourage the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Subcommittee on Aviation to reject the IAFF proposal, which could have a severe impact on airports and their ability to retain commercial air service.

> **Immigration** – We strongly support comprehensive federal immigration reform that protects U.S. national and economic security. Reform should increase security, addresses delays and disruptions in our immigration and border management systems, and refrains from unduly burdening employers with worker verification systems that are under funded or unworkable. We need legislation that is fair, meets the needs of our growing economy, and meets the test of common sense.

> **Marshallese Healthcare** – We support amendments to the 2003 Compact of Free Association (P.L. 108-188) to add Arkansas to the list of "affected jurisdictions" that are eligible for federal funding to assist in caring for resident Marshallese who are in northwest Arkansas legally and making significant economic contributions to Arkansas and to the United States. Presently only Hawaii, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are classified as "affected jurisdictions" despite Arkansas having a large concentration of Marshallese here legally.

> **Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007** – Collective Bargaining - The cities of Lowell and Rogers are very concerned about the passage of an act that will force municipalities to enter into collective bargaining arrangements with their public safety employees, regardless of state and local laws.

> **Rogers Municipal Airport** – A re-emerging issue will be the addition of radar equipment in our contract control tower. The airport will be requesting an additional DBRITE radar system (Digital Bright Radar Indicator Tower Equipment). This again is a high-priority safety need and would greatly enhance services provided by the Rogers Air Traffic Control Tower.

> **Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACA)** – NACA was formed to provide regional solutions for wastewater treatment, the removal of phosphorus-laden sludge from the watershed, and a comprehensive water-quality monitoring program for the White River, Illinois and Spavinaw watersheds. Member cities believe that a regional solution is the most cost-effective and environmentally-effective method to develop wastewater infrastructure to meet the explosive growth of northwest Arkansas, increasingly costly federal and state environmental requirements, and the more stringent and unrelenting water discharge limits imposed by the state of Oklahoma on surface waters entering its boundaries.

NACA will have up to \$30 million in federal funding requests to assist with initial start up costs. EPA estimates \$300 billion for wastewater infrastructure and an estimated \$277 billion for crumbling water infrastructure needed over the course of the next 10 years in the U.S. We, along with NACA, ask that our Congressional delegation work in Congress to develop a national program for wastewater infrastructure.