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Support for the Investing in Our Communities Act (Resolution)

WHEREAS, advance refunding of tax-exempt municipal bonds can be a financial tool that saves state and local governments billions of dollars by allowing them to provide more comprehensive savings at lower costs to taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the refunding of tax-exempt municipal bonds is a mechanism by which states and localities finance infrastructure projects, utilities, education, and other general purpose bonds; and

WHEREAS, a refunding occurs when the proceeds from one bond are used to pay off another bond, typically at a lower interest rate; and

WHEREAS, the Investing in our Communities Act as introduced in the 116th Congress restores the ability for states to advance refund their tax-exempt municipal bonds, which was eliminated by the Tax Cuts and Job Act of 2017; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Conference of State Legislatures urges Congress to pass legislation that restores the ability of states to finance public infrastructure that is cost-effective and consistent with NCSL principles of preserving fiscal viability and tax reform.
It is the policy of the National Conference of State Legislatures to advance and defend a balanced, dynamic partnership among local, state and federal governments.

Tax reform efforts and tax actions at the federal level affect states because:

- Federal and state tax systems are inextricably linked;
- Federal programs rely on state participation for implementation; and
- Any federal reform will likely have serious fiscal and administrative ramifications on the states.

Therefore, NCSL urges that all federal tax reform and other actions be guided by the following principles:

**General**

- Preserve the fiscal viability and sovereignty of state governments.
- Encourage work, savings, equity and simplicity.
- Promote efficiency and predictability.
- Avoid intrusion upon the state excise tax base.
- Preserve states’ ability and discretion to tax certain revenue sources.
- Preserve the ability of state and local governments to adopt fair and effective tax systems. This includes authorizing states with sales and use taxes to require interstate sellers to collect and remit those taxes.
and restoring the full state and local income tax, sales tax and
property tax deductions for federal income tax purposes.

- Continue tax policies that reward work, specifically the Earned
  Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Individual Development Accounts
  (IDAs).

**Transition**

- Provide states with adequate transition time to implement and
  respond to new tax systems, preferably up to three or more years.
- Avoid the negative state impact of retroactive application of tax
  changes.
- Provide technical expertise to states to ease any transition of
  administrative responsibilities to the states resulting from federal tax
  reform.
- Provide adequate federal administrative funds for any federal tax
  reform that involves modified or increased collection responsibilities
  for the states.
- Ensure that federal tax changes are made in a manner that preserves
  federal data collection used by the states.

**Do No Harm**

- Provide flexibility and strengthen states’ ability to finance and
  administer programs for which they are traditionally responsible or
  have gained through devolution.
- Recognize that federal tax reductions should not compromise funding
  for existing and future commitments to mandated state-federal
  partnership programs.
To the extent that a national sales, consumption, or value-added tax is considered as part of ongoing deficit reduction efforts, the historic role of such taxes as a major revenue source for state and local governments must be protected and all deliberations concerning such taxes must include representatives of the federal government’s partners in the nation’s cities and states.

**Tax-Exempt Financing/Bonds**

- Preserve tax-exempt financing for infrastructure and capital projects, including the use of public-private partnerships.
- Maintain the tax-exempt status of state and local government bonds and lift existing restrictions on state and local government use of tax-exempt bonds.
- Avoid provisions that weaken the fiscal integrity of state and local governments. This includes: the arbitrage rebate provisions, which essentially are a one-hundred percent tax on the interest income of state and local governments; the alternative minimum tax, which now taxes interest from otherwise tax-exempt bonds; volume caps, which have unduly restricted the use of bonds for projects that have increasingly become governmental responsibilities; and restrictions on advance refunding which increases the cost of government.
- Support the Mortgage Revenue Bond (MRB) program and the low-income housing tax credit.

**Enforcement**
• Increase enforcement efforts of the federal income tax laws so individual and business taxpayers are not bearing the burden of those who fail to pay owed taxes.

• Continue to take into account states’ reliance on federal tax rates and federal collection efforts.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes

The National Conference of State Legislatures supports federal efforts to:

• Continue, but reform the Payment in Lieu of Tax Program (PILT) program; to create a more predictable, fair and flexible system that accurately reflects the fiscal effects of federal lands on state and local governments.

• Provide full funding for the PILT program, provided that this goal is accomplished in a manner consistent with long-term federal debt management and deficit reduction; and

• Provide a more flexible payment system through authorization for the transfer of land of equivalent value from the federal government to states or counties in lieu of monetary payment, consistent with state statutes, and practice.

State Legislators’ Tax Issues

The National Conference of State Legislatures supports the standard deduction allowed state legislators under section 162 (h) of the Internal Revenue Code. Regulation, interpretation, or other statutes should not undermine the section. Regulations implementing this code section should reflect the intent of Congress and should include the following recommendations:
• A "session day" should mean a day in session as defined by the laws or rules of the state of residence of the legislator.

• A "committee" of the legislature should mean 1) a committee of one or more legislators conducting the business of [or reporting to] the legislature, or 2) a committee created by state or federal statute, resolution, order or rule on which the legislator serves in his or her capacity as a legislator. This definition of "committee" should include caucuses that conduct the business of the legislature.

• "State legislator" should include newly-elected legislators who attend official organizational meetings prior to administration of their oath of office.

Other

• Prohibit further preemption of state courts by refusing to give federal courts jurisdiction to establish the valuation of property for state and local tax purposes or by refusing to give selected classes of state and local taxpayers procedural and substantive privileges unavailable to most taxpayers.

• NCSL also encourages Congress and the administration to review the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act (4-R Act) to determine if the courts have expanded the 4-R Act beyond the original intent of Congress and reject federal legislation that would extend to other industries 4-R type benefits.

• NCSL requests the federal government to respect the sovereignty of states to allow or prohibit games of chance or skill. Any effort by Congress or the administration to reform this regulation preempts
states and diminishes the flexibility of state legislatures to use this mechanism as a revenue-related tool to meet the unique needs of residents of each state.

NCSL calls upon Congress to pass legislation that provides a framework for the taxation of digital goods and services, that provides certainty, stability and consistency for state and local governments in the taxation of digital goods and services, while protecting consumers from multiple and discriminatory taxation and supporting the continued growth of the digital economy.

As state and local governments seek to modernize their tax structures to include various forms of digital commerce, establishing a national framework would:

Establish uniform sourcing rules for state and local taxation of mobile telecommunication services;

provide certainty to those sellers required to collect such taxes

allow state and local governments that choose to tax digital goods and services to do so in a fair and rational manner.