



# Legislative Policy Positions 2025

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MRC is the Voice of Rural Counties.

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## Environment and Natural Resources

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### **Public Waters and Drainage**

MRC supports reestablishing some certainty of public waters designations established under the Public Waters Inventory Program.

MRC supports continued adequate funding for Aquatic Invasive Species programs for counties.

MRC supports adhering to the current requirements for public notice of drainage work and hearings according to Minn. Stat. 103E and the Minnesota Drainage Manual. Updates or modernization of these requirements, as well as any other changes to drainage authority, should not create additional reporting, add to county or system costs, or impact timely maintenance and repairs.

### **Wetlands**

MRC supports full state funding through the Board of Water and Soil Resources to local governments for the Local Road Wetland Replacement Program.

## Land Use Planning and Regulation

### **Agricultural Land Management**

MRC opposes the use of public funds for the purchase of private lands without notice to the county board. MRC supports a no net loss of tax base and/or acreage, as well as efforts to prioritize protecting prime agricultural land.

MRC supports land use policy that promotes communication and review between agencies that grant state funding for private lands in Greater Minnesota, and the rural communities where much of those acquisitions occur.

MRC recognizes that decisions regarding the permitting of feedlots are made by the county, and MRC supports the continuation of these permitting decisions to be made at the local level.

### **Public Land Management**

MRC supports efforts to recognize, quantify, and alleviate degradation to public and private lands caused by beavers.

MRC supports increased and continued funding for the re-surveying and remonumentation Act.

MRC recognizes Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trails on public lands are a reasonable and desirable use for recreational, environmental and economic development purposes. MRC opposes efforts to restrict or eliminate OHV access to public lands where access cannot be demonstrated to cause negative social or environmental impacts.

## Solid Waste

### **Construction and Demolition Debris Land Disposal Facilities**

MRC supports construction and demolition (C&D) rules that weigh economic and social impacts along with the environmental impacts. MRC supports full state funding to address any C&D management and facility transitions required by state law or rule. Rulemaking should use a comprehensive stakeholder process.

### **Capital Assistance Program (CAP)**

MRC supports fully funding bonding requests and increasing the limit to \$10M per county partner for solid waste management projects. Bonding dollars are only a partial match to county funds but critical for construction starts.

### **Solid Waste Management Tax**

MRC supports allocating 100 percent of Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) revenue to state and county waste management work through SCORE recycling grants to counties. The SWMT was created in 1997 to help the state and our local governments address solid waste challenges, but 27% of the SWMT collected is diverted to the general fund for non-solid waste management purposes.

### **Woodwaste**

MRC supports a state wood waste management policy and state funding for local governments to slow the creation of wood waste and maintain and improve critical infrastructure and markets for the state's increasing wood waste problems.

### **Preserve the Waste Management Hierarchy**

MRC supports maintaining Minnesota's Waste Management Hierarchy in Minn. Stat. Sec. 115A.02 and diverting waste from landfills.

### **Extended Producer Responsibility**

MRC supports product stewardship among manufacturers, retailers, and consumers, with an emphasis on industry through an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework.

EPR must provide local governments with a voluntary role in program development and implementation, and not rely on local government financing. EPR policies should provide producer-led material and toxicity reductions, recycling programs, and reduce product impacts from design through end-of-life management.

MRC supports all E-Waste, packaging, agricultural, plastic films, mattresses, solar panels, batteries of all types, and other materials to be considered for EPR programs.

## **General Government and Taxes**

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### **Intergovernmental Relations**

MRC supports adequate state funding of the court system, including county funded court infrastructure, specialty courts, court appointed counsel fees, and assistance with law library subscription costs.

MRC opposes state initiatives, implied or direct, that would force compliance by local governments with planning guidelines set by the state.

MRC supports maintaining the local government option to voluntarily adopt enforcement of the state building code.

MRC supports no loss of revenue or tax base to the county, or the use of state revenue for the purchase of private land to be converted to trust land without county input and/or recognition of tax base loss in order to avoid tax shifts to county residents.

MRC supports a full public vetting of all public land transfers, exchanges, or sales and no transfer should occur without local county board approval.

MRC supports full funding for all tribal and county costs related to the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), as well as upstream investments made to prevent children from entering the system in the first place.

MRC supports the continuation of mandatory law enforcement agreements between tribal governments and local law enforcement.

## **Mandates**

MRC opposes state mandated maintenance of effort requirements as they interfere with local decision-making and budget prioritization.

MRC believes state programs mandated for county administration should either be accompanied by adequate funding and clear direction to carry out the program, or counties should be relieved of the responsibility of carrying out the mandate.

## **Tax and Finance**

### **State Budget**

MRC supports a balanced biennial state budget, as required by our state constitution, and opposes any attempts to alter the constitution on this matter such as a constitutional amendment to authorize continuing resolutions or allowing an expiring biennial budget to continue without legislative action.

### **County Program Aid (CPA)**

MRC supports legislation providing increased and sustainable CPA funding for counties to deliver tax relief for taxpayers while maintaining essential county services for constituents.

### **Levy Limits**

MRC opposes state imposed levy limits.

MRC opposes granting levy authority to Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

### **Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)**

MRC supports legislation that would guarantee the state pays the property tax burden up front on purchases of land when using Outdoor Heritage or Legacy funds – thus guaranteeing local governments receive at least what's owed in property taxes in perpetuity.

MRC supports stable, equitable, and adequate funding for PILT.

MRC opposes legislation that would modify PILT from mining companies in the Taconite Tax Relief & Assistance Areas or any legislation that would take or divert funding away from Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (IRRR).

### **Property Taxes**

MRC supports policies that preserve the county tax base, and opposes legislative proposals that dilute the tax base and shift the property tax burden onto others.

MRC opposes initiatives by investor-owned utilities that would shift personal property taxes paid on transmission and pipelines by IOU's to local governments.

MRC supports initiatives to provide predictability and stability for state assessed properties and believes the state should pay for any refund orders.

## **Health and Human Services**

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### **Rural Nursing Homes**

MRC supports legislation aimed at addressing rural nursing home staffing and revenue concerns.

### **Children's and Family Health**

MRC recognizes the state is putting significant new focus on child protection services and supports state and federal funding enhancements to address growing demands for out of home placement and to staff those additional new county mandated requirements.

MRC recognizes that substance abuse is a significant contributor to the rising out of home placement rate and supports adequate access to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment and services throughout the state and for the state to adequately fund child protective services programs.

MRC supports an adequate network of services in Greater Minnesota to ensure all regions of the state have access to federal Family First Reimbursement.

MRC supports full funding for all tribal and county costs related to the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), as well as upstream investments made to prevent children from entering the system in the first place.

### **Community Health**

MRC opposes, as untenable, the cost shifts to counties for mental health and out of home placement costs in the community.

MRC supports sustainable funding and efforts to stabilize the Minnesota mental health system and increase our state's capacity to meet the growing mental health needs.

MRC supports development of an adequate network of regional and community treatment options to ensure that people who are placed in the state operated system can receive the adequate level of care in the community once they are ready for discharge and to maintain people in our communities.

### **Health Care Funding**

MRC supports maximization of federal reimbursements for state-mandated human services programs like MNsure, Medical Assistance, and targeted case management.

MRC supports adequate funding, significant administrative simplification, and systems modernization across the DHS and DCYF systems, specifically including a focus on updating outdated technology systems.

### **Public Health**

MRC supports increased state funding and authority for state and local governments to plan and prepare together for public health and other emergencies or disasters that impact the state.

## **Health Care Financing, Access, and Quality**

### **County Based Purchasing (CBP)**

MRC supports CBP and urges legislative leaders to do no harm to this critically important and successful health care delivery model, and supports the development of the County-Administered Rural Medical Assistance (CARMA) model.

### **Rural Hospitals**

MRC supports addressing critical delays in authorizing claims and arbitrary claim denials by Minnesota based health plans, as well as delays in the payment of reimbursement claims.

MRC opposes mandated nurse to patient staffing ratios.

MRC opposes elimination of new physician non-compete contracts that are essential to rural physician recruitment.

MRC supports additional and ongoing funding to address the needs of rural ambulance, and emergency management services.

MRC supports increased funding for non-emergency medical transportation.

### **Telehealth**

MRC supports modification of telehealth coverage service to address critical health care access needs, such as including telehealth as a paid option for rural facilities.

## **Economic Self-Sufficiency**

MRC supports adequate funding to address statewide workforce housing needs.

MRC supports addressing persistent workforce challenges in filling county positions across human services and throughout the human services field. Administrative simplification efforts are needed to streamline eligibility assessments, reassessments, and streamline required documentation by county staff to allow for more efficient execution of our work. In addition, antiquated state human services technology systems need to be updated to prevent these systems from being a barrier to recruitment and retention of county staff.

MRC supports legislative efforts to address the growing child care shortage in rural Minnesota, including but not limited to changes to the child care assistance program to make it easier to navigate for families and counties, and collaboration with family child care providers to alleviate regulation concerns.

## Transportation and Infrastructure

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MRC believes highway funding should be conducted with constitutionally dedicated funding from a statewide perspective utilizing long-term sustainable funding solutions.

MRC supports increased funding for all modes of transportation to meet the documented unmet needs of over \$1 billion every year for the next 20 years on the transportation system statewide. These increases should be comprehensive, balanced, sustainable, dedicated, and could include:

- Gas tax, including indexing or other inflationary increases;
- Motor vehicle registration fees;
- Motor vehicle sales tax;
- Gross receipts tax on transportation fuels.

MRC supports efforts to capture revenue from all highway users, including electric vehicles.

MRC supports full funding for the Board of Water and Soil administered Local Road Wetland Replacement Program.

MRC supports adequate funding for the maintenance and deployment of railroads, airports, and waterways as part of an integrated and efficient transportation system including adequate state funding for the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Program and Port Development Assistance Program to provide the necessary statewide access to national and international markets.

MRC supports directing surplus revenues to fund highway needs.

MRC supports the acceleration of auto parts sales tax revenue to the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.

MRC supports increased funding for the Local Road Improvement Program through Capital Investment in non-earmarked revenues.

MRC supports full and ongoing funding in the form of general obligation bonds for local bridge replacement and rehabilitation.

MRC believes the legislature should make every effort to pass robust bonding bills on a regular basis as they are a critical piece to funding our statewide transportation needs.

MRC wants decision makers to know that local initiatives like the Wheelage Tax and Sales Tax initiatives are not options that offer relief to border counties or counties with low population and little retail sales base.

### **Transit**

MRC supports adequate funding for rural transit systems.

## **Broadband Development**

MRC supports adequate funding to address broadband concerns in both unserved and underserved areas of the state.



MRC supports continued funding for the Border-to-Border Grant Program budget, and continues to support the current requirement that funded projects meet scalability requirements commensurate to meeting the 2026 state speed goal.

MRC supports removing the prevailing wage requirement for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program, and to allow non-Minnesota based co-ops to apply for the grant as long as the project is located in Minnesota and the program is continued.

## Energy

### **Energy and the Rural Economy**

MRC recognizes that rural economies depend on a safe, reliable and affordable source of on-going energy to meet manufacturing and production needs. MRC supports energy initiatives that assist rural agriculture, manufacturing and economic development to compete successfully for market share, and opposes energy and economic development policies that impose inequitable cost or regulatory burdens which hinder the ability of rural businesses to compete in the marketplace.

### **Transmission and Distribution**

MRC supports an energy plan going forward that recognizes reliability, affordability and flexibility are the three most important components to any new plan, and that any new plan must address critical transmission bottlenecks.

MRC supports the use of nuclear power and the use of varied energy sources as a means of gaining energy independence and maintaining a strong, reliable, and sustainable supply of power to the state.

MRC supports elimination of the moratorium on the construction of new nuclear power plants in the state.

## Public Safety, Corrections, and Courts

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MRC supports additional rounds of Public Safety Aid to counties, with spending allowances including but not limited to probation, drug and gang task forces.

MRC supports state bond matching funds or other state funding processes for county criminal justice center initiatives including but not limited to jails, dispatch and communication centers.

MRC opposes any changes to the state Department of Corrections (DOC) jail standards for existing facilities if those changes result in a financial burden on counties. If there are changes to jail standards, MRC believes there should be funding made available for counties to make those changes.

MRC supports sufficient state funding for counties to address chemical dependency. This would include funding for facilities designed to treat individuals as well as the recruitment and retention of staff to work at those facilities.

MRC supports full funding for the Community Corrections Act (CCA), County Probation Officer (CPO) and DOC formula. MRC opposes the loss of local control and supports an extension to the sunset of supervision fees.

MRC supports legislation that would help eliminate the shortage of placement locations for 72 hour mental health holds and youth in need of child protective services, and urges the state to establish sustainable funding to address this critical issue.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

MRC supports increased funding for grants awarded in equal amounts to emergency management departments in the 87 counties, 11 federally recognized tribes, and for cities of the first class, for planning and preparedness activities including capital purchases.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

MRC supports increased and ongoing funding for Regional EMS Boards and EMS recruitment, a problem due in part to shortfalls in Medicare and Medicaid payments. MRC supports legislation aimed at addressing the severe shortage of EMS workers in rural Minnesota.