



Association of Minnesota Counties Legislative Platform Development Process



For more than 100 years, the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) has assisted the state's 87 counties in providing effective governance for all citizens.

Every two years, AMC adopts a new legislative platform, which coincides with the biennial legislative session. This platform broadly outlines AMC's vision and policy positions. The platform is the basis for AMC policy analysts' lobbying efforts during the legislative session.

The AMC platform encompasses virtually all areas of county concern, including financing of human services programs, administration of jails, county board authority, funding for health and long term care services, economic development, affordable housing, agriculture policy, solid waste management, transportation financing, the county/state fiscal relationship and many other areas.

General Legislative Principles

- Preserve local control so that counties have the flexibility to address the most pressing needs of their communities.
- State budget solutions should avoid adding or shifting a disproportionate burden to counties through cost shifts, cost shares and unfunded mandates.
- Funding for county-administered services should be commensurate with the level of service or results deemed acceptable.

Annual Legislative Priorities

Each year, the membership selects a short list of priorities that will be the focus of legislative work for the coming session. Priority issues are actionable items, not general principles, concepts or philosophies. They are items that can be introduced as bills or amendments to bills. Unlike principles, which stand the test of time, priorities can be accomplished, or can change from year to year.

The purpose of developing a small number of priority issues is to focus our legislative team and members on the most important issues to counties. Our priorities raise the visibility of counties as proactive and solution-focused partners of the state.

Do You Have a Legislative Issue You'd Like to Bring to AMC?

Here are the steps you should take to move it through AMC's legislative platform development process, which begins every year in late summer:

August/September: Connect with the appropriate AMC policy analyst to discuss your position. The AMC analyst can coach you through the process, as well as discuss background/context/ possible opposition to and support for the position. You will be responsible for writing your suggestion, whether it is a new item, a change to a current platform item, or a deletion from the current platform.

September: Discuss your platform proposal with the appropriate policy committee at the AMC Fall Policy Committee meetings. This is a chance to inform the committee about the idea, and to get feedback from the committee.

October/November: If your item is selected by the policy committee as a potential priority item, it may be discussed during AMC Fall District Meetings, so that all AMC members have an opportunity to vet the issue. Not every issue is discussed at district meetings.

November 15: Make sure your platform item has been submitted in writing to the appropriate AMC Policy Analyst by this date so that it can be brought to the appropriate policy committee for final discussion in December.

December: At the AMC Annual Meeting, platform items will be discussed and voted upon in the Policy Committee. You, or someone you designate to present on your behalf, will be asked to present the item at the Policy Committee meeting to help educate the committee on the need for the item. Items that get a committee recommendation will be voted upon by the General Assembly and the platform approved at that time.

December/January: The AMC Board will finalize the priority items for the upcoming session based on feedback from district meetings.

Platform & Priorities Development

Development of the platform and priorities is based largely on the recommendations of our five AMC Policy Committees, which meet several times during the year to refine policies related to their respective areas: **General Government, Health & Human Services, Environment & Natural Resources, Public Safety, and Transportation & Infrastructure.**

Each member county is represented with one delegate on each of the committees, which means that more than 400 delegates serve on these committees.

County officials and staff have additional input into the platform during district meetings, which occur each spring and fall. During fall district meetings, counties receive copies of the draft platform and are invited to submit resolutions and amendments to the platform. They are also asked to review and rank a list of potential priority action items for the legislative session. The draft platform and any proposed resolutions are voted on during the AMC Annual Meeting, which takes place during the AMC Annual Conference in early December. The priorities are forwarded to the Board of Directors for final action.

While the platform forms the groundwork for the policy analysts during the legislative session, it is important to note that the platform is always a “work in progress.” Policy committee members throughout the following year consider changes, with our March Legislative Conference providing an opportunity for the full delegate assembly to revise the platform.

Platform & Priorities Adoption

During the annual business meeting at AMC’s Annual Conference, the general assembly adopts amendments to the AMC Platform in the following manner:

First, each policy committee chair presents the amendments recommended by their policy committee to the General Assembly. Each policy committee chair then moves the adoption of their committee’s amendments and the AMC President asks for a second for the package of amendments. At this point, the AMC President will entertain discussion by the general assembly. Members may choose to divide an amendment into smaller parts to discuss and vote on separately, or pass the package of amendments together. This process is repeated for each policy committee and the general assembly votes on each policy committee’s recommendations individually.

Under rules adopted by the Association in 1995, the presiding officer has been given the right to limit debate. Consistent with that rule, at a maximum, three persons may speak for up to three minutes each in favor of a proposed amendment and three persons may speak for up to three minutes each in opposition.

At this point, the general assembly may consider motions to suspend the rules of the conference to consider resolutions received after the mid-November cutoff or any other motions and resolutions that individual delegates may wish to offer. A motion to suspend the rules requires a two-thirds majority of those present and the usual parliamentary rules and debate limitations apply.

After all policy committee positions have been completed, the AMC president asks for a motion to adopt the platform. The AMC president will then ask for a second, and then entertain discussion by the general assembly on the full platform. The final step occurs when the AMC president will ask for a motion and a second to adopt the full platform.

In December or January of each year, the AMC Board of Directors reviews the feedback from policy committees and fall district meetings and selects a short list of key action items for the next legislative session. These items will be the primary focus of the association staff and members during the session. ■